

Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta, Volume 1

A LIFETIME IN PREPARATION

*India
1896-1965*



*A Biography of His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda*
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

**Satsvarūpa
dāsa Goswami**

A LIFETIME IN PREPARATION

Srīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta tells the story of a remarkable individual and a remarkable achievement. The individual is His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda: a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa. The achievement is the revolutionary transplanting of a timeless spiritual culture from ancient India to twentieth-century America and the world. *A Lifetime in Preparation*, the first volume of this multivolume biography, tells the story of the first sixty-nine years of Śrīla Prabhupāda's life, a period of patient and transcendent determination to prepare for an impossible mission—a mission regarded as quixotic by many of his contemporaries, but which later was crowned with astounding success.

A Lifetime in Preparation begins in Calcutta in 1896 with the birth of Abhay Charan De (Śrīla Prabhupāda) and brings us a close view of the pet child, the student, the political activist and supporter of Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent noncooperation movement for Indian independence. The high point of Abhay Charan's early life, however, is his meeting with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī, a Bengali scholar and holy man organizing a dynamic Vaiṣṇava religious movement throughout India. They meet, a vigorous debate ensues, and Abhay Charan agrees to give up his

(continued on back flap)





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A LIFETIME IN PREPARATION

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*ye me bhakta-janāḥ pārtha
na me bhaktāś ca te janāḥ
mad-bhaktānām ca ye bhaktās
te me bhaktatamā matāḥ*

Lord Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna, "Those who are directly My devotees are actually not My devotees. But those who are devotees of My servant are factually My devotees."

— Ādi Purāṇa

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Foreword

It is a distinct and unusual honor for me to be asked to write a foreword to this eloquent and informative biography of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. To my great regret, I never met him during his sojourn here in America. But I feel that I have met him. The spiritual reality of a great teacher lives on in many ways, not the least in the lives of those he has touched. Since I have come to know many of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples over the past years, as well as many devotees who were influenced by him without knowing him personally, I sense a certain acquaintanceship. To write this foreword seems, then, in some measure, like introducing a friend.

Although it is not true to say in all cases that a religious movement is the shadow of a great teacher, still there is some measure of truth even in that familiar statement. It will surely help readers of this book understand ISKCON better to know the man who founded it and to be aware of the soil from which he comes. The patience and care with which the author of this volume has reconstructed the long life Śrīla Prabhupāda had already lived even before he set forth for America makes for absorbing and inspiring reading. I read it, I confess, not just because of my own interest in Śrīla Prabhupāda but because the milieu the author recreates tells us so much more than a mere life story could. It reminds us of how very ensconced Śrīla Prabhupāda was in one of the oldest religious traditions in the world. It recalls how very much went on in the generations, centuries, and even millenia before him that seems to be gathered and focused in his life and in his teaching. In one sense Śrīla Prabhupāda was not at all "original," and reading the story of his life raises questions about our typical Western proclivity to attach such value to originality. What the book makes clear, on the contrary, is that Śrīla Prabhupāda is a man who incarnates an ancient tradition. The opening verses of the fourth chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Indian text most precious to ISKCON, teach that the ageless science of *bhakti-yoga* (what Christians might call the "devotional path" to God) is always received by what the Indians call *paramparā*, that is, it is passed from one teacher to

the next in a living chain, from ancient times to the present. Śrīla Prabhupāda is best understood, as this book presents him, as one particularly effective link in this chain.

Yet, it must be added, Śrīla Prabhupāda was also a unique person. To say that the teachings of the ancient ones come to us through a series of teachers does not mean that the teachers themselves are interchangeable. If they were so faceless, there would be little point in writing a biography of any of them. But this life of Śrīla Prabhupāda is pointed proof that one can be a transmitter of truth and still be a vital and singular person, even—in a sense I now feel safe to use—in some ways “original.” Śrīla Prabhupāda lived during a particularly critical period in Indian history, that of British colonial rule and its aftermath. He worked with and among dozens of people who befriended, opposed, supported, or ignored him. He initiated *Back to Godhead* magazine. At what almost anyone would consider a very advanced age, when most people would be resting on their laurels, he hearkened to the mandate of his own spiritual teacher and set out on the difficult and demanding voyage to America. Śrīla Prabhupāda is, of course, only one of thousands of teachers. But in another sense, he is one in a thousand, maybe one in a million.

As a Christian, it is very important and impressive to me that Śrīla Prabhupāda took it upon himself to bring the teaching he so well represents to America. This sentence I am sure requires some explanation. First of all, as a Christian I come from a tradition in which God’s *sending* of someone to bring a vital message to those who desperately need it is held in very high esteem. Throughout the Hebrew scriptures, Yahweh sends prophets to remind the people how far they have strayed from His will, to expose the way they have misused the poor and failed to defend the widow and the fatherless. In the New Testament, Jesus sends forth his disciples two by two, asking them to take along only the scantiest clothing and equipment, telling them to bear the message of peace and salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth. God Himself is depicted as sending His only son into the world on a mission that would ultimately cost him his life. Christians are taught to respect and admire those who are willing to pay the heavy price of leaving comfort and security behind to go somewhere else to carry a message of liberation.

Today, however, many Christians have become comfortable and complacent, not only unwilling themselves to engage in such hardship but

often unable even to understand or appreciate those who do. It is a great loss. Even though some people claim it is a good thing that many Christians are no longer as interested in carrying their message to other parts of the world, that they have become less presumptuous or arrogant, I personally believe it has more to do with sloth and the satiety of consumer society than with humility. I have little patience with zealous proselytizing no matter who inflicts it on whom. I do believe, however, that any spiritual teaching worth following is also worth sharing. When I visited India, living in fact in the very place where Śrīla Prabhupāda's tradition is centered, Vṛndāvana, I was thankfully received by everyone there, including the sages and holy men, and was asked to share my tradition with them. I spoke to them as a Christian about what Jesus Christ means to me and about what his teaching has to offer to the world. They listened attentively and gratefully. Their only complaint, as I recall, was that I had not spoken long enough! Indians, unlike Americans, seem in no hurry to rush off to something else if there is a serious spiritual discussion to be followed. Given the fact that I was so well received in Śrīla Prabhupāda's own land, I am sorry that he and his students still often find it so difficult to be heard or to be taken seriously here in America.

I am grateful for this book for two additional reasons that its writer could not have known. First, the author uses, among other methods, the growingly important method we in the West call "oral history." He incorporates the fruits of many interviews with the people who knew Śrīla Prabhupāda or who encountered him, who contribute some little bit of information, however tiny or fleeting, to make up the whole picture. In a few years all these people will have passed on. Those sources will be lost, at least to our mortal ears, forever. It is extremely important that the writer used this method and used it so very skillfully. I hope others will use it as effectively.

Also, perhaps without fully intending to, the author is giving us a portrait of an age the apex and the nadir of the passing epoch of which might be called "Western dominance." He shows us the devastation wreaked by "cultural imperialism" and demonstrates how stubbornly its destructive residues remain in the mental habits—and even in the eating patterns—of a previously colonized people long after the actual political rule of the outsider has been thrown off. Especially since this volume covers that period of Śrīla Prabhupāda's life before he came to America,

it is vital to see that he was also instrumental in leading a revival of traditional Indian spiritual and cultural values in India itself before he came to our shores. Since that selfsame phenomenon is now underway wherever the long arm of European dominance once reached, the book can also be read as an integral part of the growing literature of "Third World cultural renaissance."

Obviously this volume can be appreciated in many ways. It can also be read, I should add, as the very fascinating story of a very fascinating man. In any case, however the present reader wishes to approach it, I am glad now to terminate this foreword and allow him or her to get on with the joy of reading.

Harvey Cox
Professor of Divinity
Harvard University

Preface

After the disappearance of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda from this mortal world on November 14, 1977, many of his disciples saw a need for an authorized biography of Śrīla Prabhupāda. The responsibility of commissioning such a work rested with the Governing Body Commission of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. At their annual meeting in 1978, the GBC resolved that a biography of Śrīla Prabhupāda should be written and that I would be the author.

According to the Vaiṣṇava tradition, if one aspires to write transcendental literature, he must first take permission from his spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa. A good example of this is Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, the author of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu's authorized biography, *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. As Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja has explained:

In Vṛndāvana there were also many other great devotees, all of whom desired to hear the last pastimes of Lord Caitanya.

By their mercy, all these devotees ordered me to write of the last pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Because of their order only, although I am shameless, I have attempted to write this *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

Having received the order of the Vaiṣṇavas, but being anxious within my heart, I went back to the temple of Madana-mohana in Vṛndāvana to ask His permission also.

This transcendental process is further described by His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda in his commentary on the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* as follows:

To write about the transcendental pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is not an ordinary endeavor. Unless one is empowered by the higher authorities or advanced devotees, one cannot write transcendental

literature, for all such literature must be above suspicion, or in other words, it must have none of the defects of conditioned souls, namely mistakes, illusions, cheating, and imperfect sense perception. The words of Kṛṣṇa and the disciplic succession that carries the orders of Kṛṣṇa are actually authoritative. . . . One must first become a pure devotee following the strict regulative principles and chanting sixteen rounds daily, and when one thinks he is actually on the Vaiṣṇava platform, he must then take permission from the spiritual master, and that permission must also be confirmed by Kṛṣṇa from within his heart.

So to say the *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* is an authorized biography does not mean that it is a flattering portrait commissioned by an official body, but that it is an authorized literature presented by one who is serving the order of Kṛṣṇa and *guru* through the disciplic succession. As such, *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* is not written from the mundane or speculative viewpoint, nor can ordinary biographers comprehend the significance and meaning of the life of a pure devotee of God. Were such persons to objectively study the life of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the esoteric meanings would evade them. Were they to charitably try to praise Śrīla Prabhupāda, they would not know how. But because *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* is authorized through the transcendental process, it can transparently present the careful reader with a true picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Another important aspect of the authenticity of *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* is the vast amount of carefully researched information that I am able to focus into each volume. The leading devotees of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, in addition to giving me permission to render this work, have also invited the world community of ISKCON devotees to help me in gathering detailed information about the life and person of Śrīla Prabhupāda. The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, Prabhupāda's publishing house, has given me his collection of letters, totaling over seven thousand; and scores of Prabhupāda's disciples have granted interviews and submitted diaries and memoirs of their association with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Aside from his disciples, we have interviewed many persons in various walks of life who met Śrīla Prabhupāda over the years. The result is that we have a rich, composite view of Śrīla Prabhupāda, drawn from many persons who knew him in many different situ-

ations and stages of his life. The Acknowledgments section in this book lists the persons who are cooperating to bring about *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*.

Despite the authorized nature of this book and despite the support of my many well-wishers, I must confess that in attempting to describe the glories of our spiritual master, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, I am like a small bird trying to empty the ocean by carrying drops of water to the land. The picture I have given of Śrīla Prabhupāda is only a glimpse into his unlimited mercy, and that glimpse has only been possible by the grace of *guru* and Kṛṣṇa.

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami



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I would also like to thank Śrīla Rāmeśvara Swami and Śrīla Jayapatāka Swami for their help in various ways.



Introduction

This volume begins in Calcutta in 1896, with the birth of Abhay Charan De, and ends in 1965 with Abhay Charanaravinda Bhaktivedanta Swami* on his way to New York City aboard the steamship *Jaladuta*.

The worldwide fame of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, later known as Śrīla Prabhupāda, was to come after 1965—after he arrived in America. Before leaving India he had written three books; in the next twelve years he was to write sixty. Before he left India he had initiated one disciple; in the next twelve years, he would initiate more than four thousand. Before he left India, hardly anyone had believed that he could fulfill his vision of a worldwide society of Kṛṣṇa devotees, but in the next decade he would form and maintain the International Society for Krishna Consciousness and open more than a hundred centers. Before sailing for America he had never been outside India, but in the next twelve years he would travel many times around the world, propagating the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

It had been predicted in the scriptures and envisioned by great saints. A few of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Godbrothers had even tried to make it happen; they had gone to England, only to return convinced that it was impossible. But not until Śrīla Prabhupāda traveled to America did it come to pass—that Westerners wholeheartedly took up the life of Vaiṣṇavism

*Charanaravinda was the name Abhay Charan De's spiritual master gave him at his initiation. Bhaktivedanta was a title his Godbrothers conferred upon him in recognition of his devotional and scholarly qualities. The title Swami came in 1959 when he entered the renounced order.

and became Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees.

This story of Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual success is narrated in subsequent volumes of *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* ("The Nectar of the Pastimes of Śrīla Prabhupāda"), beginning with Volume 2, *Planting the Seed: New York City, 1965-1966*. Yet this present volume, which covers most of his lifetime, telling how he prepared himself for his late burst of revolutionary spiritual activity, is most important. These first sixty-nine years form a complete, dramatic life story and do not depend on anything he did later to explain them.

Abhay Charan's father, Gour Mohan De, carefully prepared Abhay from childhood for the life of a pure Vaiṣṇava. Gour Mohan taught him to worship Kṛṣṇa and encouraged him, beginning when Abhay was only five, in his Lord Jagannātha cart parade through the streets of their Calcutta neighborhood—a small Ratha-yātrā festival, the same festival Abhay was later to enact on a magnificent scale in many Western cities. Śrīla Prabhupāda used to say in his later days that whatever principles he had established as leader of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement he had learned in his childhood, with but one important exception—book publication and distribution, which he had learned later, from his spiritual master.

It was his first meeting with his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, in 1922, that focused Śrīla Prabhupāda's future life into a meditation on how to carry out the mission of preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the West. After that first meeting, his entire life—his writing, his taking *sannyāsa*, his publishing books, and finally his going to the West—became part of his dedication to carrying out the order of this higher authority.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's obligation to his wife and children and his attempts to develop a business career in the pharmaceutical industry may appear inconsistent with a single-minded determination to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, yet his earnestness in pursuing these responsibilities, and the way Providence finally extricated him from them, proved important in his essential lifetime of preparation. After he left his family responsibilities in 1950, he met with obstacles of obscurity and poverty and an insecurity imposed by the tumultuous times in which he lived, but, again, his struggle to continue his mission was part of his preparation.

In the light of Śrīla Prabhupāda's unprecedented spiritual achievements in his later life, it seems inevitable that I should say something

here about his being empowered by God. According to the Vedic scriptures, the lives of certain individuals are part of God's mission on earth. In the West, Jesus Christ is the best-known example, a chosen son sent by God from the spiritual world, and in the East, the Vedic writings tell of various *avatāras* of Lord Viṣṇu, incarnations of the Supreme Lord, with specific names, characteristics, and activities. Thus, Lord Kṛṣṇa sometimes appears Himself, and He sometimes empowers a particular devotee to do His work. Śrīla Prabhupāda, in his commentary on *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, explains about souls empowered by Lord Kṛṣṇa.

There are two kinds of living entities—*nitya-siddha* and *nitya-baddha*. The *nitya-siddha* never forgets his relationship with the Supreme Personality, whereas the *nitya-baddha* is always conditioned, even before the creation. He always forgets his relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. By the order of the Supreme, the *nitya-siddha* remains within this material world like an ordinary man, but his only business is to broadcast the glories of the Lord. All *nitya-siddhas* within this material world may appear to toil like ordinary men, but they never forget their position as servants of the Lord.

In determining whether a person is empowered by God, the main consideration is the quality of his work. In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* the scholar Vallabha says to Lord Caitanya, “The fact that You have spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world proves that You have *kṛṣṇa-śakti*, transcendental power from Lord Kṛṣṇa.” After Śrīla Prabhupāda's passing away in 1977, his senior Godbrother B. R. Śrīdhara Mahārāja quoted this same *kṛṣṇa-śakti* verse and applied it to Prabhupāda: unless he had been empowered by Kṛṣṇa, he could not have spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness as he did.

When we consider Śrīla Prabhupāda's identity as Lord Kṛṣṇa's empowered representative, the years of struggle described in this volume take on a special sweetness. These years reveal little-known events in the life of a person who was always rapt in devotional remembrance of Kṛṣṇa. Although he struggled through many hardships, his struggles were not those of an ordinary man, for he lived solely to carry out the will of *guru* and Kṛṣṇa.

I invite the reader to enjoy the very real, human life story of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who is known in this volume as Abhay Charan.

CHAPTER ONE

Childhood

*We would be sleeping, and father would be doing
ārati. Ding ding ding—we would hear the bell and
wake up and see him bowing down before Kṛṣṇa.*

—Śrīla Prabhupāda

It was Janmāṣṭamī, the annual celebration of the advent of Lord Kṛṣṇa some five thousand years before. Residents of Calcutta, mostly Bengalis and other Indians, but also many Muslims and even some British, were observing the festive day, moving here and there through the city's streets to visit the temples of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Devout Vaiṣṇavas, fasting until midnight, chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa and heard about the birth and activities of Lord Kṛṣṇa from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. They continued fasting, chanting, and worshiping throughout the night.

The next day (September 1, 1896), in a little house in the Tollygunge suburb of Calcutta, a male child was born. Since he was born on Nandotsava, the day Kṛṣṇa's father, Nanda Mahārāja, had observed a festival in honor of Kṛṣṇa's birth, the boy's uncle called him Nandulal. But his father, Gour Mohan De, and his mother, Rajani, named him Abhay Charan, "one who is fearless, having taken shelter at Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet." In accordance with Bengali tradition, the mother had gone to the home of her parents for the delivery, and so it was that on the bank of the Ādi Gaṅgā, a few miles from his father's home, in a small,

two-room, mud-walled house with a tiled roof, underneath a jackfruit tree, Abhay Charan was born. A few days later, Abhay returned with his parents to their home at 151 Harrison Road.

An astrologer did a horoscope for the child, and the family was made jubilant by the auspicious reading. The astrologer made a specific prediction: When this child reached the age of seventy, he would cross the ocean, become a great exponent of religion, and open 108 temples.

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Abhay Charan De was born into an India dominated by Victorian imperialism. Calcutta was the capital of India, the seat of the viceroy, the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, and the “second city” of the British Empire. Europeans and Indians lived separately, although in business and education they intermingled. The British lived mostly in central Calcutta, amidst their own theaters, racetracks, cricket fields, and fine European buildings. The Indians lived more in north Calcutta. Here the men dressed in *dhotīs* and the women in *sārīs* and, while remaining loyal to the British Crown, followed their traditional religion and culture.

Abhay’s home at 151 Harrison Road was in the Indian section of north Calcutta. Abhay’s father, Gour Mohan De, was a cloth merchant of moderate income and belonged to the aristocratic *suvarṇa-vanīk* merchant community. He was related, however, to the wealthy Mullik family, which for hundreds of years had traded in gold and salt with the British. Originally the Mulliks had been members of the De family, a *gotra* (lineage) that traces back to the ancient sage Gautama; but during the Mogul period of pre-British India a Muslim ruler had conferred the title Mullik (“lord”) on a wealthy, influential branch of the Des. Then, several generations later, a daughter of the Des had married into the Mullik family, and the two families had remained close ever since.

An entire block of properties on either side of Harrison Road belonged to Lokanath Mullik, and Gour Mohan and his family lived in a few rooms of a three-story building within the Mullik properties. Across the street from the Des’ residence was a Rādhā-Govinda temple where for the past 150 years the Mulliks had maintained worship of the Deity of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Various shops on the Mullik properties provided income for the

Deity and for the priests conducting the worship. Every morning before breakfast, the Mullik family members would visit the temple to see the Deity of Rādhā-Govinda. They would offer cooked rice, *kacaurīs*, and vegetables on a large platter and would then distribute the *prasādam* to the Deities' morning visitors from the neighborhood.

Among the daily visitors was Abhay Charan, accompanying his mother, father, or servant.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *I used to ride on the same perambulator with Siddhesvar Mullik. He used to call me Moti ("pearl"), and his nickname was Subidhi. And the servant pushed us together. If one day this friend did not see me, he would become mad. He would not go in the perambulator without me. We would not separate even for a moment.*

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As the servant pushed the baby carriage into the wide expanse of Harrison Road, timing his crossing between the bicycles and horse-drawn hackneys, the two children in the pram gazed up at the fair sky and tall trees across the road. Sounds and sights of the hackneys, with their large wheels spinning over the road, caught the fascinated attention of the two children. The servant steered the carriage towards the arched gateway within the red sandstone wall bordering the Rādhā-Govinda Mandira, and as Abhay and his friend rode underneath the ornate metal arch and into the courtyard, they saw high above them two stone lions, the heralds and protectors of the temple compound, their right paws extended.

In the courtyard was a circular drive, and on the oval lawn were lamp-posts with gaslights, and a statue of a young woman in robes. Sharply chirping sparrows flitted in the shrubs and trees or hopped across the grass, pausing to peck the ground, while choruses of pigeons cooed, sometimes abruptly flapping their wings overhead, sailing off to another perch or descending to the courtyard. Voices chattered as Bengalis moved to and fro, dressed in simple cotton *sārīs* and white *dhotīs*. Someone paused by the carriage to amuse the golden-skinned boys, with their shining dark eyes, but mostly people were passing by quickly, going into the temple.

The heavy double doors leading into the inner courtyard were open, and the servant eased the carriage wheels down a foot-deep step and

proceeded through the foyer, then down another step and into the bright sunlight of the main courtyard. There they faced a stone statue of Garuḍa, perched on a four-foot column. This carrier of Viṣṇu, Garuḍa, half man and half bird, kneeled on one knee, his hands folded prayerfully, his eagle's beak strong, and his wings poised behind him. The carriage moved ahead past two servants sweeping and washing the stone courtyard. It was just a few paces across the courtyard to the temple.

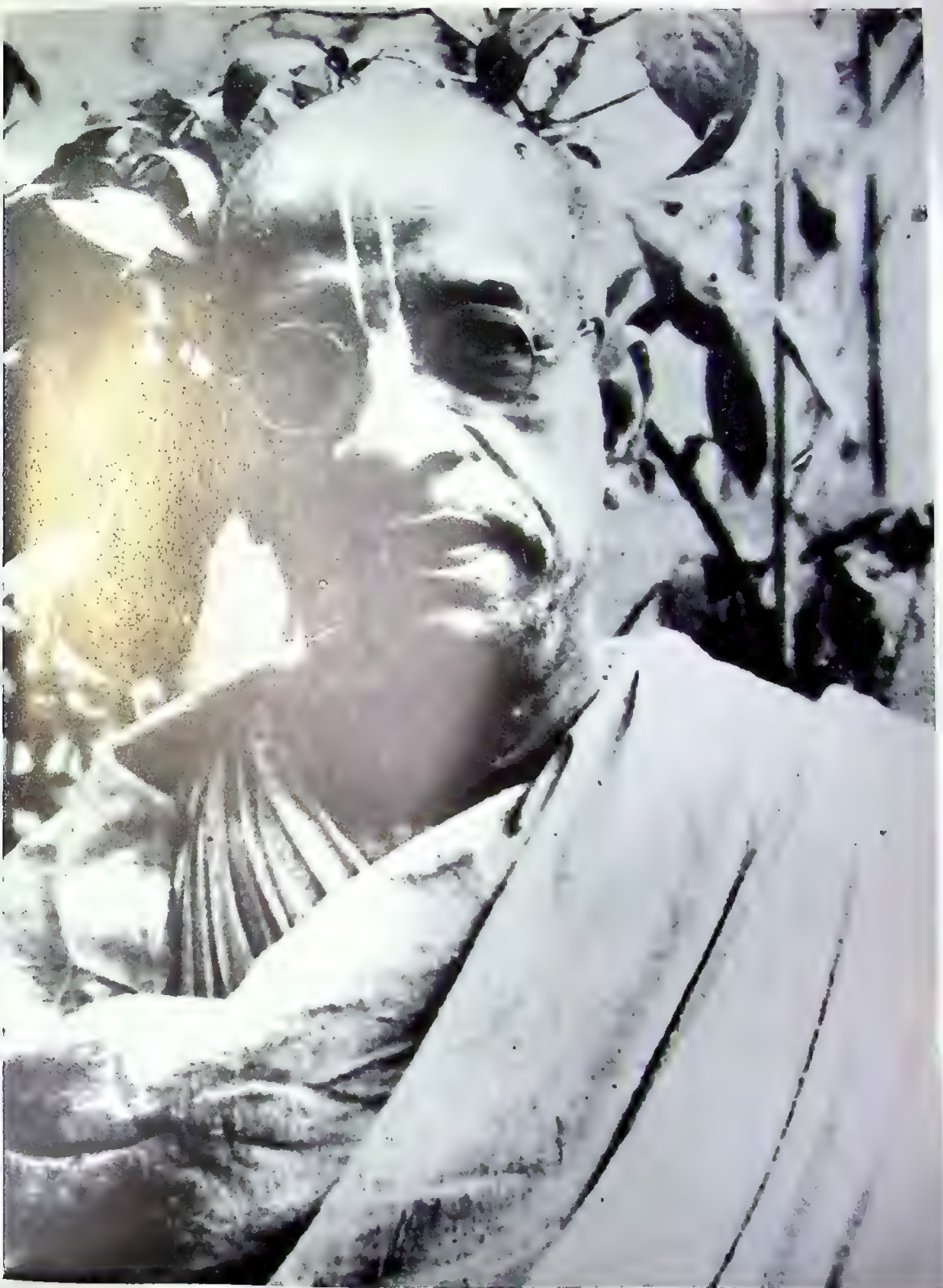
The temple area itself, open like a pavilion, was a raised platform with a stone roof supported by stout pillars fifteen feet tall. At the left end of the temple pavilion stood a crowd of worshipers, viewing the Deities on the altar. The servant pushed the carriage closer, lifted the two boys out, and then, holding their hands, escorted them reverentially before the Deities.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *I can remember standing at the doorway of Rādhā-Govinda temple saying prayers to Rādhā-Govinda mūrti. I would watch for hours together. The Deity was so beautiful, with His slanted eyes.*

Rādhā and Govinda, freshly bathed and dressed, now stood on Their silver throne amidst vases of fragrant flowers. Govinda was about eighteen inches high, and Rādhārāṇī, standing to His left, was slightly smaller. Both were golden. Rādhā and Govinda both stood in the same gracefully curved dancing pose, right leg bent at the knee and right foot placed in front of the left. Rādhārāṇī, dressed in a lustrous silk *sārī*, held up Her reddish right palm in benediction, and Kṛṣṇa, in His silk jacket and *dhotī*, played on a golden flute.

At Govinda's lotus feet were green *tulasī* leaves with pulp of sandalwood. Hanging around Their Lordships' necks and reaching down almost to Their lotus feet were several garlands of fragrant night-blooming jasmines, delicate, trumpetlike blossoms resting lightly on Rādhā and Govinda's divine forms. Their necklaces of gold, pearls, and diamonds shimmered. Rādhārāṇī's bracelets were of gold, and both She and Kṛṣṇa wore gold-embroidered silk *cāḍars* about Their shoulders. The flowers in Their hands and hair were small and delicate, and the silver crowns on Their heads were bedecked with jewels. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were slightly smiling.

Beautifully dressed, dancing on Their silver throne beneath a silver canopy and surrounded by flowers, to Abhay They appeared most attractive. Life outside, on Harrison Road and beyond, was forgotten. In the



His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness



Gour Mohan De taught his son Abhay to worship the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities.



Beginning from the age of five, Abhay performed a miniature Ratha-yātrā festival. More than sixty-five years later, he enacted the same festival on a magnificent scale in many Western cities.



Abhay Charan first met his spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, in Calcutta in 1922.



Soon after his first meeting with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī in Calcutta, Abhay moved with his family to Allahabad, where he based his pharmaceutical business. Although ten years elapsed before their next meeting, within his heart Abhay accepted Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī as his spiritual master and thought of him always.



Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati initiated Abhay in Allahabad in 1932.



It was at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, Vṛndāvana, in November 1935, that Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī told Abhay, "If you ever get money, print books."



In the 1940s, while living in Calcutta, Abhay tried to involve his wife and son in preaching.



In Jhansi in the early 1950s, Abhay attempted to form a worldwide organization, The League of Devotees.



Beginning in 1956, Abhay distributed his *Back to Godhead* magazine in New Delhi.



In the years 1962–1965, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami wrote and printed the first three volumes of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

courtyard the birds went on chirping, and visitors came and went, but Abhay stood silently, absorbed in seeing the beautiful forms of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī, the Supreme Lord and His eternal consort.

Then the *kīrtana* began, devotees chanting and playing on drums and *karatālas*. Abhay and his friend kept watching as the *pūjārīs* offered incense, its curling smoke hanging in the air, then a flaming lamp, a conchshell, a handkerchief, flowers, a whisk, and a peacock fan. Finally the *pūjārī* blew the conchshell loudly, and the *ārati* ceremony was over.

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When Abhay was one-and-a-half years old, he fell ill with typhoid. The family physician, Dr. Bose, prescribed chicken broth.

"No," Gour Mohan protested, "I cannot allow it."

"Yes, otherwise he will die."

"But we are not meat-eaters," Gour Mohan pleaded. "We cannot prepare chicken in our kitchen."

"Don't mind," Dr. Bose said. "I shall prepare it at my house and bring it in a jar, and you simply . . ."

Gour Mohan assented. "If it is necessary for my son to live." So the doctor came with his chicken broth and offered it to Abhay, who immediately began to vomit.

"All right," the doctor admitted. "Never mind, this is no good." Gour Mohan then threw the chicken broth away, and Abhay gradually recovered from the typhoid without having to eat meat.

On the roof of Abhay's maternal grandmother's house was a little garden with flowers, greenery, and trees. Along with the other grandchildren, two-year-old Abhay took pleasure in watering the plants with a sprinkling can. But his particular tendency was to sit alone amongst the plants. He would find a nice bush and make a sitting place.

One day when Abhay was three, he narrowly escaped a fatal burning. He was playing with matches in front of his house when he caught his

cloth on fire. Suddenly a man appeared and put the fire out. Abhay was saved, although he retained a small scar on his leg.

In 1900, when Abhay was four, a vehement plague hit Calcutta. Dozens of people died every day, and thousands evacuated the city. When there seemed no way to check the plague, an old *bābājī* organized Hare Kṛṣṇa *saṅkīrtana* all over Calcutta. Regardless of religion, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and Parsi all joined, and a large party of chanters traveled from street to street, door to door, chanting the names Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. The group arrived at Gour Mohan's house at 151 Harrison Road, and Gour Mohan eagerly received them. Although Abhay was a little child, his head reaching only up to the knees of the chanters, he also joined in the dancing. Shortly after this, the plague subsided.

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Gour Mohan was a pure Vaiṣṇava, and he raised his son to be Kṛṣṇa conscious. Since his own parents had also been Vaiṣṇavas, Gour Mohan had never touched meat, fish, eggs, tea, or coffee. His complexion was fair and his disposition reserved. At night he would lock up his cloth shop, set a bowl of rice in the middle of the floor to satisfy the rats so that they would not chew the cloth in their hunger, and return home. There he would read from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the main scriptures of Bengali Vaiṣṇavas, chant on his *japa* beads, and worship the Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He was gentle and affectionate and would never punish Abhay. Even when obliged to correct him, Gour Mohan would first apologize: "You are my son, so now I must correct you. It is my duty. Even Caitanya Mahāprabhu's father would chastise Him, so don't mind."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *My father's income was no more than 250 rupees, but there was no question of need. In the mango season when we were children, we would run through the house playing, and we would grab mangoes as we were running through. And all through the day we would eat mangoes. We wouldn't have to think, "Can I have a mango?" My*

father always provided food—mangoes were one rupee a dozen.

Life was simple, but there was always plenty. We were middle class but receiving four or five guests daily. My father gave four daughters in marriage, and there was no difficulty for him. Maybe it was not a very luxurious life, but there was no scarcity of food or shelter or cloth. Daily he purchased two and a half kilograms of milk. He did not like to purchase retail but would purchase a year's supply of coal by the cartload.

We were happy—not that because we did not purchase a motorcar we were unhappy. My father used to say, “God has ten hands. If He wants to take away from you, with two hands how much can you protest? And when He wants to give to you with ten hands, then with your two hands how much can you take?”

My father would rise a little late, around seven or eight. Then, after taking bath, he would go purchasing. Then, from ten o'clock to one in the afternoon, he was engaged in pūjā. Then he would take his lunch and go to business. And in the business shop he would take a little rest for one hour. He would come home from business at ten o'clock at night, and then again he would do pūjā. Actually, his real business was pūjā. For livelihood he did some business, but pūjā was his main business. We would be sleeping, and father would be doing āratī. Ding ding ding—we would hear the bell and wake up and see him bowing down before Kṛṣṇa.

Gour Mohan wanted Vaiṣṇava goals for his son; he wanted Abhay to become a servant of Rādhārāṇī, to become a preacher of the Bhāgavatam, and to learn the devotional art of playing mṛdaṅga. He regularly received sādhus in his home, and he would always ask them, “Please bless my son so that Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī may be pleased with him and grant him Her blessings.”

Enjoying each other's company, father and son used to walk as far as ten miles, saving the five-paisa tram fare. On the beach they used to see a yogī who for years had sat in one spot without moving. One day the yogī's son was sitting there, and people had gathered around; the son was taking over his father's sitting place. Gour Mohan gave the yogīs a donation and asked their blessings for his son.

When Abhay's mother said she wanted him to become a British lawyer when he grew up (which meant he would have to go to London to study), one of the Mullik “uncles” thought it was a good idea. But Gour Mohan

would not hear of it; if Abhay went to England he would be influenced by European dress and manners. "He will learn drinking and women-hunting," Gour Mohan objected. "I do not want his money."

From the beginning of Abhay's life, Gour Mohan had introduced his plan. He had hired a professional *mṛdaṅga* player to teach Abhay the standard rhythms for accompanying *kīrtana*. Rajani had been skeptical: "What is the purpose of teaching such a young child to play the *mṛdaṅga*? It is not important." But Gour Mohan had his dream of a son who would grow up singing *bhajan*s, playing *mṛdaṅga*, and speaking on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

When Abhay sat to play the *mṛdaṅga*, even with his left and right arms extended as far as he could, his small hands would barely reach the drumheads at the opposite ends of the drum. With his right wrist he would flick his hand just as his teacher instructed, and his fingers would make a high-pitched sound—*tee nee tee nee taw*—and then he would strike the left drumhead with his open left hand—*boom boom*. With practice and age he was gradually learning the basic rhythms, and Gour Mohan looked on with pleasure.

Abhay was an acknowledged pet child of both his parents. In addition to his childhood names Moti, Nandulal, Nandu, and Kocha, his grandmother called him *Kacaurī-mukhī* because of his fondness for *kacaurīs* (spicy, vegetable-stuffed fried pastries, popular in Bengal). Both his grandmother and mother would give him *kacaurīs*, which he kept in the many pockets of his little vest. He liked to watch the vendors cooking on the busy roadside and accept *kacaurīs* from them and from the neighbors, until all the inside and outside pockets of his vest were filled.

Sometimes when Abhay demanded that his mother make him *kacaurīs*, she would refuse. Once she even sent him to bed. When Gour Mohan came home and asked, "Where is Abhay?" Rajani explained how he had been too demanding and she had sent him to bed without *kacaurīs*. "No, we should make them for him," his father replied, and he woke Abhay and personally cooked *purīs* and *kacaurīs* for him. Gour Mohan was always lenient with Abhay and careful to see that his son got whatever he wanted. When Gour Mohan returned home at night, it was his practice to take a little puffed rice, and Abhay would also sometimes sit with his father, eating puffed rice.

Once, at a cost of six rupees, Gour Mohan bought Abhay a pair of shoes imported from England. And each year, through a friend who traveled back and forth from Kashmir, Gour Mohan would present his son a Kashmiri shawl with a fancy, hand-sewn border.

One day in the market, Abhay saw a toy gun he wanted. His father said no, and Abhay started to cry. "All right, all right," Gour Mohan said, and he bought the gun. Then Abhay wanted another gun. "You already have one," his father said. "Why do you want another one?"

"One for each hand," Abhay cried, and he lay down in the street, kicking his feet. When Gour Mohan agreed to get the second gun, Abhay was pacified.

Abhay's mother, Rajani, was thirty years old when he was born. Like her husband, she came from a long-established Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava family. She was darker-skinned than her husband, and whereas his disposition was cool, hers tended to be fiery. Abhay saw his mother and father living together peacefully; no deep marital conflict or complicated dissatisfaction ever threatened home. Rajani was chaste and religious minded, a model housewife in the traditional Vedic sense, dedicated to caring for her husband and children. Abhay observed his mother's simple and touching attempts to insure, by prayers, by vows, and even by rituals, that he continue to live. Whenever he was to go out even to play, his mother, after dressing him, would put a drop of saliva on her finger and touch it to his forehead. Abhay never knew the significance of this act, but because she was his mother he stood submissively "like a dog with its master" while she did it.

Like Gour Mohan, Rajani treated Abhay as the pet child; but whereas her husband expressed his love through leniency and plans for his son's spiritual success, she expressed hers through attempts to safeguard Abhay from all danger, disease, and death. She once offered blood from her breast to one of the demigods with the supplication that Abhay be protected on all sides from danger.

At Abhay's birth, she had made a vow to eat with her left hand until the day her son would notice and ask her why she was eating with the wrong hand. One day, when little Abhay actually asked, she immediately stopped. It had been just another prescription for his survival, for she thought that by the strength of her vow he would continue to grow, at

least until he asked her about the vow. Had he not asked, she would never again have eaten with her right hand, and according to her superstition he would have gone on living, protected by her vow.

For his protection she also put an iron bangle around his leg. His playmates asked him what it was, and Abhay self-consciously went to his mother and demanded, "Open this bangle!" When she said, "I will do it later," he began to cry, "No, now!" Once Abhay swallowed a watermelon seed, and his friends told him it would grow in his stomach into a watermelon. He ran to his mother, who assured him he didn't have to worry; she would say a *mantra* to protect him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Mother Yaśodā would chant mantras in the morning to protect Kṛṣṇa from all dangers throughout the day. When Kṛṣṇa killed some demon she thought it was due to her chanting. My mother would do a similar thing with me.

His mother would often take him to the Ganges and personally bathe him. She also gave him a food supplement known as Horlicks. When he got dysentery, she cured it with hot *purīs* and fried eggplant with salt, though sometimes when he was ill Abhay would show his obstinacy by refusing to take any medicine. But just as he was stubborn, his mother was determined, and she would forcibly administer medicine into his mouth, though sometimes it took three assistants to hold him down.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I was very naughty when I was a boy. I would break anything. When I was angry, I would break the glass hookah pipes which my father kept to offer to guests. Once my mother was trying to bathe me, and I refused and knocked my head on the ground, and blood came out. They came running and said, "What are you doing? You shall kill the child."

Abhay was present when his mother observed the ceremony of *Sādhā-hotra* during the seventh and ninth months of her pregnancies. Freshly bathed, she would appear in new clothing along with her children and enjoy a feast of whatever foods she desired, while her husband gave goods in charity to the local *brāhmaṇas*, who chanted *mantras* for the purification of the mother and the coming child.

Abhay was completely dependent on his mother. Sometimes she would put his shirt on backwards, and he would simply accept it without mentioning it. Although he was sometimes stubborn, he felt dependent on the guidance and reassurance of his mother. When he had to go to the privy, he would jump up and down beside her, holding her *sārī* and say-

ing, "Urine, mother, urine."

"Who is stopping you?" she would ask. "Yes, you can go." Only then, with her permission, would he go.

Sometimes, in the intimacy of dependence, his mother became his foil. When he lost a baby tooth and on her advice placed it under a pillow that night, the tooth vanished, and some money appeared. Abhay gave the money to his mother for safekeeping, but later, when in their constant association she opposed him, he demanded, "I want my money back! I will go away from home. Now you give me my money back!"

When Rajani wanted her hair braided, she would regularly ask her daughters. But if Abhay were present he would insist on braiding it himself and would create such a disturbance that they would give in to him. Once he painted the bottoms of his feet red, imitating the custom of women who painted their feet on festive occasions. His mother tried to dissuade him, saying it was not for children, but he insisted, "No, I must do it, also!"

Abhay was unwilling to go to school. "Why should I go?" he thought. "I will play all day." When his mother complained to Gour Mohan, Abhay, sure that his father would be affectionate, said, "No, I shall go tomorrow."

"All right, he will go tomorrow," said Gour Mohan. "That's all right." But the next morning Abhay complained that he was sick, and his father indulged him.

Rajani became upset because the boy would not go to school, and she hired a man for four rupees to escort him there. The man, whose name was Damodara, would tie Abhay about the waist with a rope—a customary treatment—take him to school, and present him before his teacher. When Abhay would try to run away, Damodara would pick him up and carry him in his arms. After being taken a few times by force, Abhay began to go on his own.

Abhay proved an attentive, well-behaved student, though sometimes he was naughty. Once when the teacher pulled his ear, Abhay threw a kerosene lantern to the floor, accidentally starting a fire.

In those days any common villager, even if illiterate, could recite from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, or *Bhāgavatam*. Especially in the

villages, everyone would assemble in the evening to hear from these scriptures. It was for this purpose that Abhay's family would sometimes go in the evening to his maternal uncle's house, about ten miles away, where they would assemble and hear about the Lord's transcendental pastimes. They would return home discussing and remembering them and then go to bed and dream *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, and *Bhāgavatam*.

After his afternoon rest and bath, Abhay would often go to a neighbor's house and look at the black-and-white pictures in *Mahābhārata*. His grandmother asked him daily to read *Mahābhārata* from a vernacular edition. Thus by looking at pictures and reading with his grandmother, Abhay imbibed *Mahābhārata*.

In Abhay's childhood play, his younger sister Bhavatarini was often his assistant. Together they would go to see the Rādhā-Govinda Deities in the Mulliks' temple. In their play, whenever they encountered obstacles, they would pray to God for help. "Please, Kṛṣṇa, help us fly this kite," they would call as they ran along trying to put their kite into flight.

Abhay's toys included two guns, a wind-up car, a cow that jumped when Abhay squeezed the rubber bulb attached, and a dog with a mechanism that made it dance. The toy dog was from Dr. Bose, the family physician, who gave it to him when treating a minor wound on Abhay's side. Abhay sometimes liked to pretend that he was a doctor, and to his friends he would administer "medicine," which was nothing more than dust.

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Abhay was enamored with the Ratha-yātrā festivals of Lord Jagannātha, held yearly in Calcutta. The biggest Calcutta Ratha-yātrā was the Mulliks', with three separate carts bearing the deities of Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā. Beginning from the Rādhā-Govinda temple, the carts would proceed down Harrison Road for a short distance and then return. The Mulliks would distribute large quantities of Lord Jagannātha's *prasādam* to the public on this day.

Ratha-yātrā was held in cities all over India, but the original, gigantic Ratha-yātrā, attended each year by millions of pilgrims, took place three hundred miles south of Calcutta at Jagannātha Purī. For centuries at Purī, three wooden carts forty-five feet high had been towed by the crowds along the two-mile parade route, in commemoration of one of Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes. Abhay had heard how Lord Caitanya Himself, four hundred years before, had danced and led ecstatic chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa at the Purī Ratha-yātrā festival. Abhay would sometimes look at the railway timetable or ask about the fare to Vṛndāvana and Purī, thinking about how he would collect the money and go there.

Abhay wanted to have his own cart and to perform his own Ratha-yātrā, and naturally he turned to his father for help. Gour Mohan agreed, but there were difficulties. When he took his son to several carpenter shops, he found that he could not afford to have a cart made. On their way home, Abhay began crying, and an old Bengali woman approached and asked him what the matter was. Gour Mohan explained that the boy wanted a Ratha-yātrā cart but they couldn't afford to have one made. "Oh, I have a cart," the woman said, and she invited Gour Mohan and Abhay to her place and showed them the cart. It looked old, but it was still operable, and it was just the right size, about three feet high. Gour Mohan purchased it and helped to restore and decorate it. Father and son together constructed sixteen supporting columns and placed a canopy on top, resembling as closely as possible the ones on the big carts at Purī. They also attached the traditional wooden horse and driver to the front of the cart. Abhay insisted that it must look authentic. Gour Mohan bought paints, and Abhay personally painted the cart, copying the Purī originals. His enthusiasm was great, and he became an insistent organizer of various aspects of the festival. But when he tried making fireworks for the occasion from a book that gave illustrated descriptions of the process, Rajani intervened.

Abhay engaged his playmates in helping him, especially his sister Bhavatarini, and he became their natural leader. Responding to his entreaties, amused mothers in the neighborhood agreed to cook special preparations so that he could distribute the *prasādam* at his Ratha-yātrā festival.

Like the festival at Purī, Abhay's Ratha-yātrā ran for eight consecutive days. His family members gathered, and the neighborhood children

joined in a procession, pulling the cart, playing drums and *karatālas*, and chanting. Wearing a *dhōtī* and no shirt in the heat of summer, Abhay led the children in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and in singing the appropriate Bengali *bhajana*, *Ki kara rāi kamalinī*.

What are You doing, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī?
Please come out and see.
They are stealing Your dearest treasure—
Kṛṣṇa, the black gem.
If the young girl only knew!
The young boy Kṛṣṇa,
Treasure of Her heart,
Is now forsaking Her.

Abhay copied whatever he had seen at adult religious functions, including dressing the deities, offering the deities food, offering *ārati* with a ghee lamp and incense, and making prostrated obeisances. From Harrison Road the procession entered the circular road inside the courtyard of the Rādhā-Govinda temple and stood awhile before the Deities. Seeing the fun, Gour Mohan's friends approached him: "Why haven't you invited us? You are holding a big ceremony, and you don't invite us? What is this?"

"They are just children playing," his father replied.

"Oh, children playing?" the men joked. "You are depriving us by saying that this is only for children?"

While Abhay was ecstatically absorbed in the Ratha-yātrā processions, Gour Mohan spent money for eight consecutive days, and Rajani cooked various dishes to offer, along with flowers, to Lord Jagannātha. Although everything Abhay did was imitation, his inspiration and steady drive for holding the festival were genuine. His spontaneous spirit sustained the eight-day children's festival, and each successive year brought a new festival, which Abhay would observe in the same way.

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When Abhay was about six years old, he asked his father for a Deity of his own to worship. Since infancy he had watched his father doing *pūjā* at home and had been regularly seeing the worship of Rādhā-Govinda

and thinking, "When will I be able to worship Kṛṣṇa like this?" On Abhay's request, his father purchased a pair of little Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities and gave Them to him. From then on, whatever Abhay ate he would first offer to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and imitating his father and the priests of Rādhā-Govinda, he would offer his Deities a ghee lamp and put Them to rest at night.

Abhay and his sister Bhavatarini became dedicated worshipers of the little Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities, spending much of their time dressing and worshipping Them and sometimes singing *bhajan*as. Their brothers and sisters laughed, teasing Abhay and Bhavatarini by saying that because they were more interested in the Deity than in their education they would not live long. But Abhay replied that they didn't care.

Once a neighbor asked Abhay's mother, "How old is your little son?"

"He's seven," she said, as Abhay listened with interest. He had never heard anyone discuss his age before; but now he understood for the first time: "I am seven."

In addition to the education Abhay received at the kindergarten to which he had at first been forcibly dragged, he also received private tutoring at home from his fifth year to his eighth. He learned to read Bengali and began learning Sanskrit. Then in 1904, when he was eight years old, Abhay entered the nearby Mutty Lall Seal Free School, on the corner of Harrison and Central roads.

Mutty Lall was a boys' school established in 1842 by a wealthy *suvarṇa-vaṇik* Vaiṣṇava. The building was stone, two stories, and surrounded by a stone wall. The teachers were Indian, and the students were Bengalis from local *suvarṇa-vaṇik* families. Dressed in their *dhotis* and *kurtās*, the boys would leave their mothers and fathers in the morning and walk together in little groups, each boy carrying a few books and his *tiffin*. Inside the school compound, they would talk together and play until the clanging bell called them to their classes. The boys would enter the building, skipping through the halls, running up and down the stairs, coming out to the wide front veranda on the second floor, until their teachers gathered them all before their wooden desks and benches

for lessons in math, science, history, geography, and their own Vaiṣṇava religion and culture.

Classes were disciplined and formal. Each long bench held four boys, who shared a common desk, with four inkwells. If a boy were naughty his teacher would order him to "stand up on the bench." A Bengali reader the boys studied was the well-known *Folk Tales of Bengal*, a collection of traditional Bengali folk tales, stories a grandmother would tell local children—tales of witches, ghosts, Tantric spirits, talking animals, saintly *brāhmaṇas* (or sometimes wicked ones), heroic warriors, thieves, princes, princesses, spiritual renunciation, and virtuous marriage.

In their daily walks to and from school, Abhay and his friends came to recognize, at least from their childish viewpoint, all the people who regularly appeared in the Calcutta streets: their British superiors traveling about, usually in horse-drawn carriages; the hackney drivers; the *bhaṅgīs*, who cleaned the streets with straw brooms; and even the local pickpockets and prostitutes who stood on the street corners.

Abhay turned ten the same year the rails were laid for the electric tram on Harrison Road. He watched the workers lay the tracks, and when he first saw the trolley car's rod touching the overhead wire, it amazed him. He daydreamed of getting a stick, touching the wire himself, and running along by electricity. Although electric power was new in Calcutta and not widespread (only the wealthy could afford it in their homes), along with the electric tram came new electric streetlights—carbon-arc lamps—replacing the old gaslights. Abhay and his friends used to go down the street looking on the ground for the old, used carbon tips, which the maintenance man would leave behind. When Abhay saw his first gramophone box, he thought an electric man or a ghost was inside the box singing.

Abhay liked to ride his bicycle down the busy Calcutta streets. Although when the soccer club had been formed at school he had requested the position of goalie so that he wouldn't have to run, he was an avid cyclist. A favorite ride was to go south towards Dalhousie Square, with its large fountains spraying water into the air. That was near Raj Bhavan, the viceroy's mansion, which Abhay could glimpse through the gates. Riding further south, he would pass through the open arches of the Maidan, Calcutta's main public park, with its beautiful green flat land

spanning out towards Chowranghee and the stately buildings and trees of the British quarter. The park also had exciting places to cycle past: the racetrack, Fort William, the stadium. The Maidan bordered the Ganges (known locally as the Hooghly), and sometimes Abhay would cycle home along its shores. Here he saw numerous bathing *ghāṭas*, with stone steps leading down into the Ganges and often with temples at the top of the steps. There was the burning-*ghāṭa*, where bodies were cremated, and, close to his home, a pontoon bridge that crossed the river into the city of Howrah.

At age twelve, though it made no deep impression on him, Abhay was initiated by a professional *guru*. The *guru* told him about his own master, a great *yogī*, who had once asked him, "What do you want to eat?"

Abhay's family *guru* had replied, "Fresh pomegranates from Afghanistan."

"All right," the *yogī* had replied. "Go into the next room." And there he had found a branch of pomegranates, ripe as if freshly taken from the tree. A *yogī* who came to see Abhay's father said that he had once sat down with his own master and touched him and had then been transported within moments to the city of Dvārakā by yogic power.

Gour Mohan did not have a high opinion of Bengal's growing number of so-called *sādhus*—the nondevotional impersonalist philosophers, the demigod worshipers, the *gañjā* smokers, the beggars—but he was so charitable that he would invite the charlatans into his home. Every day Abhay saw many so-called *sādhus*, as well as some who were genuine, coming to eat in his home as guests of his father, and from their words and activities Abhay became aware of many things, including the existence of yogic powers. At a circus he and his father once saw a *yogī* tied up hand and foot and put into a bag. The bag was sealed and put into a box, which was then locked and sealed, but still the man came out. Abhay, however, did not give these things much importance compared with the devotional activities his father had taught him, his worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and his observance of Ratha-yātrā.

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Hindus and Muslims lived peacefully together in Calcutta, and it was not unusual for them to attend one another's social and religious functions. They had their differences, but there had always been harmony. So when trouble started, Abhay's family understood it to be due to political agitation by the British. Abhay was about thirteen years old when the first Hindu-Muslim riot broke out. He did not understand exactly what it was, but somehow he found himself in the middle of it.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *All around our neighborhood on Harrison Road were Muhammadans. The Mullik house and our house were respectable; otherwise, it was surrounded by what is called kasbā and bastī. So the riot was there, and I had gone to play. I did not know that the riot had taken place in Market Square. I was coming home, and one of my class friends said, "Don't go to your house. That side is rioting now."*

We lived in the Muhammadan quarter, and the fighting between the two parties was going on. But I thought maybe it was something like two guṇḍās [hoodlums] fighting. I had seen one guṇḍā once stabbing another guṇḍā, and I had seen pickpockets. They were our neighbor-men. So I thought it was like that: this is going on.

But when I came to the crossing of Harrison Road and Holliday Street I saw one shop being plundered. I was only a child, a boy. I thought, "What is this happening?" In the meantime, my family, my father and mother, were at home frightened, thinking, "The child has not come." They became so disturbed they came out of the home expecting, "Wherefrom the child will come?"

So what could I do? When I saw the rioting I began to run towards our house, and one Muhammadan, he wanted to kill me. He took his knife and actually ran after me. But I passed somehow or other. I was saved. So as I came running before our gate, my parents got back their life.

So without speaking anything I went to the bedroom, and it was in the winter. So without saying anything, I laid down, wrapped myself with a quilt. Then later I was rising from bed, questioning, "Is it ended? The riot has ended?"

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When Abhay was fifteen he was afflicted with beriberi, and his mother, who was also stricken, regularly had to rub a powder of calcium

chloride on his legs to reduce the swelling. Abhay soon recovered, and his mother, who had never stopped any of her duties, also recovered.

But only a year later, at the age of forty-six, his mother suddenly died. Her passing away was an abrupt lowering of the curtain, ending the scenes of his tender childhood: his mother's affectionate care, her prayers and *mantras* for his protection, her feeding and grooming him, her dutifully scolding him. Her passing affected his sisters even more than him, though it certainly turned him more towards the affectionate care of his father. He was already sixteen, but now he was forced to grow up and prepare to enter on his own into worldly responsibilities.

His father gave him solace. He instructed Abhay that there was nothing for which to lament: the soul is eternal, and everything happens by the will of Kṛṣṇa, so he should have faith and depend upon Kṛṣṇa. Abhay listened and understood.



CHAPTER TWO

College, Marriage, and Gandhi's Movement

I joined Gandhi's movement in 1920 and gave up my education. Although I had passed my final examination — B.A. — I gave it up and did not appear.

—Śrīla Prabhupāda

In 1914 the war came, and many Indians enlisted in the fight on behalf of their ruler, Great Britain. Abhay saw British airplanes landing on the racetrack in Maidan Park, and the newspaper told him of the war, but he was not directly affected. In 1916 he began college.

There were two prestigious colleges in Calcutta: Presidency and Scottish Churches'. Abhay entered Scottish Churches' College. It was a Christian school but well reputed amongst the Bengalis, and many Vaiṣṇava families sent their sons there. The professors, most of whom were priests in the Church of Scotland, were known as sober, moral men, and the students received a good education. It was a proper and respectable institution, and since it was in north Calcutta and not far from Harrison Road, Gour Mohan could keep Abhay at home.

Gour Mohan had long ago decided that he would not allow Abhay to go to London and in the name of education become exposed to the corruption of the West. He wanted Abhay to be a pure devotee of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Lord Kṛṣṇa. Yet on the other hand, Gour Mohan didn't want to give up his son to become the *brahmacārī* disciple of a *guru*. Where was such a qualified *guru* to be found? His experience of *yogīs* and swamis had not inspired such confidence. He wanted his son to keep all the principles of spiritual life, yet he also knew that Abhay would

have to marry and earn a livelihood. Under the circumstances, enrolling Abhay in Scottish Churches' College was the most protection Gour Mohan knew to give his son.

The college had been founded by the Reverend Alexander Duff, a Christian missionary who had gone to Calcutta in 1830. A pioneer in getting Indians to appreciate European civilization, the Reverend A. Duff had first founded the General Assembly Institution, for "propagation of the gospel through education, at once liberal and religious, on Western principles and with English as the medium of instruction in the higher classes." Later he had founded the College of the Church of Scotland and in 1908 had amalgamated both institutions as Scottish Churches' College.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *We respected our professors as our fathers. The relationship between the students and the professors was very good. The vice-chancellor, Professor W. S. Urquhart, was a perfect and kindhearted gentleman, with whom we sometimes joked.*

In my first year I studied English and Sanskrit, in my second year Sanskrit and philosophy. Then philosophy and economics. Another professor was J. C. Scrimgeour. He was professor of English literature. While teaching English literature he would give parallel passages from Bankim Chandra Chatterji. "Yes, yes," he would say, "your Bankim Bābū says like this." He had studied Bankim's literatures, and he compared Bankim Chandra Chatterji to Walter Scott. In those days, Dickens and Sir Walter Scott were two very great English literary men. So he taught us those novelists, and the relationship was very nice.

Abhay became a member of the English Society and would recite Keats, Shelley, and other poets to his classmates. As a member of the Sanskrit Society, he recited the *Gītā*, and some of his fellow students especially noted how eloquently he recited the Eleventh Chapter, describing the universal form of Kṛṣṇa. He also played soccer and took part in theatrics.

Amritlal Bose, a famous organizer and director of theater in Bengal, rehearsed Abhay and a group of his classmates in a drama from the life of Lord Caitanya. Since Caitanya *līlā* was available in the public theater for half a rupee, Mr. Bose argued, what was the need for an amateur production? And his answer was, "They should appreciate your performance of Lord Caitanya so much that after seeing it they will agree never to sin."

The eminent director was volunteering his service and training these boys, but on one condition: they would not perform publicly unless he said the production was perfect. For more than a year, Abhay and the others rehearsed the Caitanya play, until finally their director allowed them to stage a public performance. Abhay, playing the part of Advaita Ācārya, noticed that many people in the audience were crying. At first he could not understand why, but then he realized that because the players had been well trained and because they were sincere, the audience was moved. That was Abhay's first and last dramatic performance.

Abhay's psychology teacher, Professor Urquhart, gave evidence that woman's brain weighed less than man's. His economics professor lectured on Marshall's theory that family affection is the impetus for economic development. In Sanskrit Abhay used a text by Rowe and Webb that described Sanskrit as the mother of all languages.

While studying Kālīdāsa's *Kumāra-sambhava* in Sanskrit, Abhay was impressed by Kālīdāsa's explanation of the word *dhīra*, which means "undisturbed," or "self-controlled." According to Kālīdāsa, once long ago Lord Śiva was sitting in deep meditation. Because the demigods were at war with the demons, they wanted a commander in chief born from the semen of Lord Śiva, so the demigods sent a beautiful young girl, Pārvatī, to interrupt his meditation. Although Pārvatī worshiped Lord Śiva and even touched his genitals, he was not disturbed. His resistance to temptation was the perfect example of being *dhīra*.

As at other British-run schools in India, all the European teachers at Scottish Churches' had to learn the local language. Once Professor Urquhart walked past Abhay and a group of students as they were eating some peanuts and talking together. One of the students, speaking in Bengali, made a joke at Professor Urquhart's expense. To their surprise, Professor Urquhart immediately turned to the jokester and answered in Bengali, and Abhay and the others felt ashamed.

Bible study was compulsory. The Bible Society had issued each student a beautifully bound Bible, and each morning everyone gathered for scripture reading, prayers, and hymns.

One of the professors criticized the Vedic teachings of *karma* and transmigration of the soul. In a court of law one cannot be prosecuted for a crime unless there is a witness. Similarly, he argued, although according to Hindus the soul suffers in his present life for the misdeeds of his

past life, where is the witness to these misdeeds? Abhay was displeased to hear this criticism, and he knew how to refute it, but being only a student he had remained silent. Socially he was inferior, and a student had little scope to challenge a professor. But he knew that the professor's argument against *karma* was insubstantial; he knew there was a witness.

Some of the students, having come to Calcutta from small villages, viewed the big city and the presence of so many Europeans with bewilderment and timidity. But to Abhay, Calcutta and the British were not alarming, and he even held a certain fondness for his Scottish teachers. Although he looked up to them with a mixture of awe, distance, and some tension, he admired their moral uprightness and their gentlemanly, courteous behavior with the boys. They seemed to him kindhearted.

The governor of Bengal, who was Scottish, once came to Scottish Churches' College, visiting all the classrooms. The rooms were large, holding 150 students, but Abhay had a front-row seat and got a close look at the famous governor, the Marquis of Zetland.

The school operated on the principle of strict social distance between Europeans and Indians. Even the Bengali faculty members, being of a supposedly inferior race, had to use a faculty lounge separate from that of the European professors. Part of the college syllabus was *England's Work in India*, by M. Ghosh, an Indian. The book elaborately explained how India had been primitive before the British rule. Abhay's economics professor would sometimes shout at his class when he became frustrated with their slowness. Addressing them as representatives of the whole Indian nation, he would say, "You should never expect independence! You cannot rule! You can only work like asses, that's all!"

College life was demanding. No longer was Abhay free to spend hours before the Deities of Rādhā and Govinda early in the morning. That had been a boyhood luxury, when he would daily pass hours in the Mullik's temple before the golden forms of Rādhā-Govinda, watching the *pūjārīs* as they worshiped the Deities with incense, flowers, lamps, musical *kīrtana*, and opulent *prasādam*. As a child he had played within the grassy compound of the temple or watched the men cooking *kacaurīs* on the roadside or bicycled or flown his kite with Bhavatarini. His life had always centered on his home at Harrison Road, his mother's talks, his father's worshipping Kṛṣṇa. These scenes were now past.

Now he spent his days within the compound of Scottish Churches' College. Here there was also a lawn and a garden with birds and even a small banyan tree. But instead of worship, there was study. The atmosphere at Scottish Churches' was academic, and even the casual conversation among the students as they gathered before the notice boards at the main entrance or passed in groups in and out of the main gates was usually about class assignments or collegiate activities.

When Abhay was not actually sitting side by side with his fellow students, sharing a classroom bench before one of the long desks that stood row after row in the lecture hall, when he was not looking attentively forward during the lecture of one of his professors—usually a reverend dressed in a European suit, speaking a Scottish brogue and pronouncing words like *duty* as “*juty*”—when he was not actually in the classroom hearing their lectures on Western logic or chemistry or psychology, then he was at his homework assignments, sitting at a table amidst the bookshelves in the college library, reading from an open book or writing notes while the electric fans overhead rippled the pages, or he was at home with his father, sisters, and brothers, but reading his lessons or writing a paper for the reverend in the lecture hall. He had had to abandon worshipping the Kṛṣṇa Deity he had demanded his father give him years before; he had retired his Deities to a closed box.

Gour Mohan was undisturbed that his pet son could no longer attend to all the devotional activities of his childhood. He saw that Abhay was remaining pure in all his habits, that he was not adopting Western ideas or challenging his own culture, and that as a student at Scottish Churches' College he would not likely be exposed to immoral behavior. Gour Mohan was satisfied to see Abhay getting a good education to prepare for a career after graduation. He would be a responsible Vaiṣṇava; he would soon marry and get a job.

One of Abhay's classmates and close companions was Rupendranatha Mitra. Abhay and Rupen would study together and sit side by side in the assembly hall during Bible class, uttering the compulsory prayers. Rupen noticed that although Abhay was a serious student, he was never enamored of Western education or ambitious for scholastic achievements. Abhay would confide to Rupen, “I don't like these things,” and sometimes he spoke of moving away. “What are you thinking?” Rupen would ask, and Abhay would reveal his mind. Rupen found that Abhay

was always thinking about "something religious, something philosophical or devotional about God."

Abhay studied the Western philosophers and scientists, yet they held no fascination for him. After all, they were only speculating, and their conclusions were not in the devotional mood and spirit of the Vaiṣṇava training he had received from his father and the Vedic scriptures. The sudden access to the wealth of Western knowledge, which created in some an appetite to study deeply and in others a desire to get ahead in the world through good grades and career, left Abhay untouched. Certainly within his heart he was always thinking of "something religious, something philosophical or devotional about God," and yet, as a Scottish Churches' College man, he gave his time and attention to academic life.

One night, after his first year of college, Abhay had an unusual dream. The Deity of Kṛṣṇa his father had given him appeared to Abhay complaining, "Why have you put Me away in this box? You should take Me out and worship Me again." Abhay felt sorry that he had neglected his Deity, and he resumed his worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa at home, despite his assignments.

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In the class one year ahead of Abhay was a very spirited nationalist, Subhas Chandra Bose. He had been a student at Presidency College but had been expelled for organizing a student strike against a British professor who had repeatedly abused Indian students. At Scottish Churches', Bose appeared to be a serious student; he was secretary of the Philosophy Club and was working cooperatively with Vice-Chancellor Urquhart. From Subhas Bose and others, Abhay heard talks of Indian independence. He heard the names well known in his native Bengal: Bipinchandra Pal, who had fought to repeal the Arms Act; Surendranatha Bannerjee, who startled the British with his agitation against the 1905 partition of Bengal; Lala Lajpat Rai; and, most notably, Mohandas K. Gandhi.

Scottish Churches' College was strict in forbidding antigovernment propaganda, but the students were sympathetic to the cause of home rule. Although there were no open signs of rebellion, students sometimes held nationalistic meetings in secret. When Subhas Chandra Bose urged

the students to support the Indian independence movement, Abhay listened. He liked Bose's faith in spirituality, his enthusiasm and determination. Abhay wasn't interested in political activity, but the ideals of the independence movement appealed to him.

Many Bengali speakers and writers expressed India's drive for independence (*svarāj*) as a spiritual movement. For the nationalists, political emancipation was analogous to the soul's liberation from material bondage. Abhay was interested in devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Absolute Truth, a conviction he had imbibed from his father and maintained since his childhood, whereas Indian independence was a temporary, relative truth. But some of the leaders of *svarāj*, while admitting that the Vedic scriptures were indeed absolute, asserted that the original glory of Indian culture could not shine forth for the world's benefit until India became free from the stigma of foreign rule. The foreigners, they pointed out, blasphemed and castigated the preeminence of India's culture.

Abhay had felt this also. In his assigned reading in M. Ghosh's *England's Work in India*, he had encountered the theory that the Vedic scriptures were impure, recent writings and that India's had been a spiritually backward culture before British rule and the spread of Christianity. There were many British insults against the *śāstras*—such as Abhay's professor's trying to discount the law of *karma*. But if India could gain national freedom, then everyone—not only Indians, but the entire world—could benefit from India's highly evolved Vedic culture.

The call to *svarāj*, although covert, attracted virtually all the students, and Abhay amongst them. He was especially interested in Gandhi. Gandhi always carried a *Bhagavad-gītā*; he daily read Lord Kṛṣṇa's holy words and spoke of being guided by the *Gītā* above all other books. Gandhi's personal habits were pure. He abstained from all intoxication, meat-eating, and illicit sex. He lived simply, like a *sādhū*, yet he seemed to have more integrity than the begging *sādhūs* Abhay had seen so many times. Abhay read his speeches and followed his activities—maybe Gandhi could carry spirituality into the field of action. The *Gītā*'s truth, Gandhi proclaimed, belonged in a most prominent place, where the *Gītā* not only could be read but could *work* for everyone's freedom. And the symbol of that freedom was *svarāj*.

Nationalist sympathies at Scottish Churches' College remained

underground during Abhay's years as a student. It was a prestigious school. A student had to study very seriously to obtain a degree there, and he could then look forward to a fine career. To speak openly against British rule and in favor of independence meant to risk being expelled. To lose education and career—only the most rebellious would dare. So the students met undercover and listened to the revolutionary leaders: "We want *svarāj*! We want independence! Our own government! Our own schools!"

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Gour Mohan watched his son with concern. He saw Abhay not as one of the hundreds of millions of instruments meant to change India's political destiny, but as his pet son. His first concern was for Abhay's welfare. While world events moved across the stage of history, Gour Mohan concentrated on his son's future as he hoped it would be and as he had always prayed it would be. He was planning for Abhay to become a pure Vaiṣṇava, a devotee of Rādhārāṇī. He had taught Abhay to worship Kṛṣṇa and be pure in character and had arranged for his education. Now Gour Mohan thought of getting him married.

According to the Vedic system, a marriage should be carefully arranged by the parents, and it should take place before the girl reaches puberty. Gour Mohan had gotten his first daughter married in her ninth year, his second daughter at twelve years, and his third daughter at eleven. When his second daughter was going on twelve, Rajani had said, "I shall go to the river and commit suicide if you don't get her married at once." In the Vedic system there was no courtship, nor was the couple allowed to live together during the first years of their marriage. The young girl would begin serving her husband by cooking for him at her parents' house and coming before him to serve him his meal or by taking part in some other formal exchange. Then as the boy and girl grew to physical maturity, they would become so lovable to one another that they would be inseparable. The girl would naturally remain faithful to her husband since she would have no association with any other boy as she grew to puberty.

Gour Mohan had many friends in Calcutta with eligible young daughters, and for a long time he had been considering a suitable wife

for Abhay. After careful consultation, he finally chose Radharani Datta, the daughter of a *suvarṇa-vanik* family associated with the Mulliks. Radharani was eleven years old. After the meeting between her father and Gour Mohan, both families agreed upon the marriage.

Although Abhay was a third-year college student with no income, it was not uncommon for a student to marry, and he would have no immediate financial responsibilities. Abhay didn't appreciate his father's choice of a wife—he had thought of marrying another girl—but in deference to his father he put aside his reluctance. For the time being, he was living with his family and she with hers; so his marital responsibilities of supporting a family would not be immediate. First he had to finish college.

During his fourth year at Scottish Churches', Abhay began to feel reluctant about accepting his degree. As a sympathizer to the nationalist cause, he preferred national schools and self-government over the British institutions, but he could see that as yet no such alternatives existed. Gandhi, however, was calling on Indian students to forsake their studies. The foreign-run schools, he said, instilled a slave mentality; they made one no more than a puppet in the hands of the British. Still, a college degree was the basis of a life's career. Abhay weighed the choices carefully.

Gour Mohan didn't want Abhay to do something he would later regret. He had always tried to plan the best for his son, but Abhay was twenty-three and would have to make this decision for himself. Gour Mohan thought of the future; the horoscope said his son would be a great religious preacher at age seventy, but Gour Mohan did not expect to live to see it. Still, he had every reason to accept the horoscope as accurate, and he wanted to prepare Abhay. He tried to plan things accordingly, but there was no way to guess what Kṛṣṇa would do. Everything depended on Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa was above nationalism, above planning and the laws of astrology, and above the desires of a modest cloth merchant aspiring to make his son a pure devotee of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and a preacher of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Although Gour Mohan had always allowed Abhay to do what he wanted, he had also carefully guided him always on the path he knew was best. Now, without interfering with Abhay's decision

about college, Gour Mohan set about to arrange good employment for him, regardless of what else might happen.

In 1920 Abhay completed his fourth year of college and took the B.A. exam. Afterwards, with the ordeal of final examinations behind him, he took a short vacation. To fulfill a long-cherished desire, he traveled alone a day's journey by train to Jagannātha Purī.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *Every day of my boyhood I used to think, "How to go to Jagannātha Purī?" and "How to go to Vṛndāvana?" At that time the fare was, for Vṛndāvana, four or five rupees, and similarly for Jagannātha Purī. So I was thinking, "When shall I go?" I took the first opportunity to go to Jagannātha Purī.*

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He walked along the same broad street where for thousands of years the Ratha-yātrā procession had passed. In the market, shops displayed small carved and painted wooden *mūrtis* of Lord Jagannātha. Although it was not Ratha-yātrā season, tourists were purchasing souvenirs, and in the temple they purchased Jagannātha *prasādam*. In the Jagannātha temple, fifty-six gigantic offerings of cooked rice and vegetables were presented daily in worship before the deities of Jagannātha, Balarāma, and Subhadrā.

Abhay entered the temple and saw the deities. On a side altar stood the *mūrti* of Lord Caitanya in His six-armed form, manifesting Himself simultaneously as Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, and the *sannyāsī* Lord Caitanya. Lord Caitanya was famous in Purī, where He had spent the last eighteen years of His life, conducting Hare Kṛṣṇa *kīrtana* with His followers and dancing ecstatically at the yearly Ratha-yātrā as the carts were wheeled along the main road, surrounded by thousands of devotees. Lord Caitanya had danced and swooned in the ecstasy of His intense love in separation from Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Passing over the parade route, Abhay recalled his own childhood pastimes—singing and dancing in the street, the miniature cart, the procession, Jagannātha smiling, his father and mother, Rādhā-Govinda. Somehow the fame of Lord Jagannātha had inspired him as a child, and it had remained within him all these years: "When shall I go to Jagannātha Purī?" His childhood dreaming of Purī and Vṛndāvana and his com-

pulsively studying the train tables, scheming since the age of five to travel here, were based on more than just a desire to tour Purī's marketplace, and he was not satisfied by once seeing the Deity in the noisy, crowded temple. He had been impelled to come to Purī as a pilgrim, and his motive was his devotion to Kṛṣṇa.

Now nationalism was strongly influencing his life, and he had recently married and was facing the decisions of graduation and career. Yet here he was, hardly more than a boy, walking alone in Purī, where Lord Caitanya had lived and where Lord Kṛṣṇa as Jagannātha still resided. Abhay relished his break from the pressure of duties in Calcutta. He didn't know how the love he felt for Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's pilgrimage place would fit into his life. He knew that Kṛṣṇa was more important than anything else—He was God, the supreme controller, and everyone's inner guide. But there was so much token, superficial service to God. Even the nationalist speakers, although they carried the *Gītā* on their person, were more intent on nationalism than on Kṛṣṇa. Only those who were sincere devotees knew the importance and attraction of Kṛṣṇa—people like his father.

An odd incident occurred at Purī. Gour Mohan had given Abhay a letter of introduction to an acquaintance who lived in Jagannātha Purī. Abhay went to see him and was well received. When the man was offering him lunch, however, Abhay noticed a small lump within one of the cooking pots. He questioned his host, who replied, "Oh, it is meat."

Abhay was unable to restrain his shock: "No! What is this! I have never taken meat." Abhay looked at his host in astonishment: "I never expected this at Jagannātha Purī."

Ashamed, his host said, "I did not know. I thought this was the best." Abhay pacified the man, but he put his food aside and took no more meals there. After that, Abhay ate only the Jagannātha *prasādam* from the temple.

Abhay stayed in Purī for three or four days, wandering around the holy places and visiting the famous Purī seaside, with its sparkling beach and strongly pounding surf. Several times he recognized some of the priests from the Jagannātha temple as they smoked cigarettes, and he

heard of other unsavory activities of the *sādhus* connected with the temple. What kind of *sādhus* were these who ate fish with their Jagannātha *prasādam* and smoked? In this respect, he found Jagannātha Purī disappointing.

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When Abhay returned home, he found his young wife crying. Then he heard how her friends had told her, "Your husband is not coming back." He told her not to worry, there was no truth in the story; he had only gone for a few days and was now back.

Although his marriage had only recently begun, Abhay was dissatisfied. Radharani Datta was an attractive young girl, but Abhay had never really liked her. He was thinking maybe a different wife would be better, a second wife besides this one. In India it was socially acceptable to marry a second wife, so Abhay decided to take the matter into his own hands; he made arrangements to approach the parents of another girl. But when his father heard about it, he called Abhay and said, "My dear boy, you are eager to take a second wife, but I would advise you not to. It is Kṛṣṇa's grace that your present wife is not to your liking. Take it as a great fortune. If you do not become too attached to your wife and family, that will help you in your future advancement in spiritual life." Abhay accepted his father's advice; he wanted to obey his father, and he appreciated the saintly viewpoint. But he remained thoughtful, a bit awed by his father's forethought, and he wondered how one day in the future he would be advancing in spiritual life and be grateful that his father had done this. "Your future advancement in spiritual life"—Abhay liked the idea. He reconciled himself to the wife he had been given.

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Abhay Charan De's name was included on the posted list of students who had passed the B.A. exams and who were invited to appear for their diploma. But Abhay had decided he didn't want a diploma from Scottish Churches' College. Although as a graduate he would have a promising career, it would be a British-tainted career. If Gandhi succeeded, India would soon be rid of the British. Abhay had made his decision, and when graduation day arrived, the college authorities learned of his rejecting

his diploma. In this way, Abhay registered his protest and signaled his response to Gandhi's call.

Gandhi's protest had increased its pitch in recent months. During the war, Indians had remained loyal to the Crown in hopes of generating British sympathy towards the cause of independence. But in 1919 England had passed the Rowlatt Act to repress the move for Indian freedom. Gandhi had then called on all Indians to observe a *hartāl*, a day in which people all over the country had stayed home from work and school in protest. Although it had been a nonviolent protest, one week later in Amritsar in the public square known as Jallianwalla Bagh, British soldiers shot to death hundreds of unarmed, defenseless Indians who had gathered for a peaceful meeting. Gandhi then lost all faith in the intentions of the empire towards India. Calling for complete noncooperation, he ordered a boycott of everything British—commodities, schools, courts, military honors. And Abhay, in refusing his degree, was moving to align himself more closely with Gandhi's independence movement.

But his heart was not in it. Just as he had never given his heart to college studies, to earning a degree, to his wife, so he was reserved about becoming a full-fledged nationalist. Abhay had become inclined towards the cause, but never really convinced. Now, out of school, out of work, caring little for his career, education, or wife, he remained at home. He tried his hand at writing poetry for the occasion of a friend's wedding. He read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the latest speeches of Gandhi. He had no immediate plans.

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Gour Mohan had his plans for Abhay, and the college degree had been an integral part of those plans. But Kṛṣṇa, it seemed, had other plans. The political protest of refusing the Bachelor of Arts degree was more a mark of honor than a social stigma, and Gour Mohan did not reproach his son for it. But Abhay still needed to take up some kind of work. Gour Mohan approached his friend Kartick Bose and asked him to employ Abhay.

Dr. Kartick Chandra Bose, an intimate friend, had been the family doctor since Abhay's childhood. He was a distinguished surgeon, a medical scholar, and a chemical industrialist. He had his own establishment, Bose's Laboratory, in Calcutta, where he manufactured drugs, soaps, and

other products for the pharmaceutical industry. Dr. Bose was well known throughout India as the first Indian to manufacture pharmaceutical preparations that had formerly been monopolized by European firms. He agreed to accept Abhay as a department manager at his laboratory.

Although Abhay knew little of the pharmaceutical industry or of management, he felt confident that by reading a few related books he could learn what he needed to know. But when this new young man was suddenly given the post of department manager, several workers became dissatisfied. Some of them were elderly and had been forty years with the firm. They voiced their dissatisfaction amongst themselves and finally confronted Dr. Bose: Why had this young man been put in charge? Dr. Bose replied, "Oh, for that position I needed someone I could trust like my own son. He is signing checks for forty thousand rupees. I could only entrust the personal handling of my accounts in that department to him. His father and I are very close, and this young man is known to me practically as my son."

Gour Mohan felt he had done his best. His prayer was that the principles of pure Vaiṣṇavism he had taught his son would stay with him and guide him throughout his life. Gandhi and the cause of *svarāj* had disrupted Abhay's college career, and Abhay was still inclined towards nationalism, but not so much for a political motive as for a spiritual vision. So Gour Mohan was content. He knew the marriage arrangement was not pleasing to Abhay, but Abhay had accepted his explanation that detachment from wife and family affairs would be good for spiritual advancement. And Abhay was showing an inherent disinterest in materialistic affairs. This also did not displease Gour Mohan, to whom business had always been subservient to his worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He had expected this. Now Abhay had a promising job and would be making the best of his marriage. Gour Mohan had done what he could, and he depended on Kṛṣṇa for the ultimate result.

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Gandhi, bolstered by his emergence as a leader among the Congress Party, now openly attacked the empire's exploitative cloth trade with

India. England was purchasing raw cotton from India at the lowest prices, manufacturing it into cloth in the Lancashire mills in England, and then selling the monopolized cloth at high prices to the Indian millions. Gandhi's propaganda was that India should return to making her own cloth, using simple spinning wheels and handlooms, thus completely boycotting the British-made cloth and attacking an economic base of Britain's power over India. Traveling by train throughout the country, Gandhi repeatedly appealed to his countrymen to reject all foreign cloth and wear only the simple coarse *khādī* produced from India's own cottage industry. Before the British rule, India had spun and woven her own cloth. Gandhi argued that by breaking the cottage industries, the British were sinking the Indian masses into semistarvation and lifelessness.

To set the example, Gandhi himself worked daily at a primitive spinning wheel and wore only a simple, coarse loincloth and shawl. He would hold meetings and ask people to come forth and reject their imported cloth. On the spot, people would throw down heaps of cloth, and he would set it ablaze. Gandhi's wife complained that the *khādī* was too thick and not convenient to wear while cooking; she asked if while cooking she could wear the light, British-made cloth. "Yes, you're free to cook with your mill cloth on," Gandhi had told her, "but I must exercise a similar freedom by not taking the meal so prepared."

The cause of cottage industry appealed to Abhay. He, too, was not enamored with the modern industrial advances the British had introduced in India. Not only was simple living good for the long-term national economy of hundreds of millions of Indians, as Gandhi was emphasizing, but to Abhay it was also the way of life most conducive to spiritual culture. Abhay put aside his mill-manufactured cloth and took to wearing *khādī*. Now his dress revealed him to whomever he met, British and Indian alike. He was a nationalist, a sympathizer of revolution. To wear *khādī* in India in the early 1920s was not a mere clothing fad; it was a political statement. It meant he was a Gandhian.



CHAPTER THREE

“A Very Nice Saintly Person”

There has not been, there will not be, such benefactors of the highest merit as [Chaitanya] Mahāprabhu and His devotees have been. The offer of other benefits is only a deception; it is rather a great harm, whereas the benefit done by Him and His followers is the truest and greatest eternal benefit. This benefit is not for one particular country, causing mischief to another; but it benefits the whole universe.

—Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī

Abhay's friend Narendranath Mullik was insistent. He wanted Abhay to see a *sādhu* from Māyāpur. Naren and some of his friends had already met the *sādhu* at his nearby *āśrama* on Ultadanga Junction Road, and now they wanted Abhay's opinion. Everyone within their circle of friends considered Abhay the leader, so if Naren could tell the others that Abhay also had a high regard for the *sādhu*, then that would confirm their own estimations. Abhay was reluctant to go, but Naren pressed him.

They stood talking amidst the passersby on the crowded early-evening street, as the traffic of horse-drawn hackneys, oxcarts, and occasional auto taxis and motor buses moved noisily on the road. Naren put his hand firmly around his friend's arm, trying to drag him forward, while Abhay smiled but stubbornly pulled the other way. Naren argued that

since they were only a few blocks away, they should at least pay a short visit. Abhay laughed and asked to be excused. People could see that the two young men were friends, but it was a curious sight, the handsome young man dressed in white *khādī kurtā* and *dhotī* being pulled along by his friend.

Naren explained that the *sādhū*, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, was a Vaiṣṇava and a great devotee of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. One of his disciples, a *sannyāsī*, had visited the Mullik house and had invited them to meet Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta. A few of the Mulliks had gone to see him and had been very much impressed.

But Abhay remained skeptical. "Oh, no! I know all these *sādhūs*," he said. "I'm not going." Abhay had seen many *sādhūs* in his childhood; every day his father had entertained at least three or four in his home. Some of them were no more than beggars, and some even smoked *gañjā*. Gour Mohan had been very liberal in allowing anyone who wore the saffron robes of a *sannyāsī* to come. But did it mean that though a man was no more than a beggar or *gañjā* smoker, he had to be considered saintly just because he dressed as a *sannyāsī* or was collecting funds in the name of building a monastery or could influence people with his speech?

No. By and large, they were a disappointing lot. Abhay had even seen a man in his neighborhood who was a beggar by occupation. In the morning, when others dressed in their work clothes and went to their jobs, this man would put on saffron cloth and go out to beg and in this way earn his livelihood. But was it fitting that such a so-called *sādhū* be paid a respectful visit, as if he were a *guru*?

Naren argued that he felt that this particular *sādhū* was a very learned scholar and that Abhay should at least meet him and judge for himself. Abhay wished that Naren would not behave this way, but finally he could no longer refuse his friend. Together they walked past the Parsnath Jain Temple to 1 Ultadanga, with its sign, Bhaktivinod Asana, announcing it to be the quarters of the Gaudiya Math.

When they inquired at the door, a young man recognized Mr. Mullik—Naren had previously given a donation—and immediately escorted them up to the roof of the second floor and into the presence of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, who was sitting and enjoying the early evening at-

mosphere with a few disciples and guests.

Sitting with his back very straight, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī appeared tall. He was slender, his arms were long, and his complexion was fair and golden. He wore round bifocals with simple frames. His nose was sharp, his forehead broad, and his expression was very scholarly yet not at all timid. The vertical markings of Vaiṣṇava *tilaka* on his forehead were familiar to Abhay, as were the simple *sannyāsa* robes that draped over his right shoulder, leaving the other shoulder and half his chest bare. He wore *tulasī* neck beads, and the clay Vaiṣṇava markings of *tilaka* were visible at his throat, shoulder, and upper arms. A clean white brahminical thread was looped around his neck and draped across his chest. Abhay and Naren, having both been raised in Vaiṣṇava families, immediately offered prostrated obeisances at the sight of the revered *sannyāsī*.

While the two young men were still rising and preparing to sit, before any preliminary formalities of conversation had begun, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta immediately said to them, “You are educated young men. Why don’t you preach Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s message throughout the whole world?”

Abhay could hardly believe what he had just heard. They had not even exchanged views, yet this *sādhū* was telling them what they should do. Sitting face to face with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Abhay was gathering his wits and trying to gain a comprehensible impression, but this person had already told them to become preachers and go all over the world!

Abhay was immediately impressed, but he wasn’t going to drop his intelligent skepticism. After all, there were assumptions in what the *sādhū* had said. Abhay had already announced himself by his dress to be a follower of Gandhi, and he felt the impulse to raise an argument. Yet as he continued to listen to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta speak, he also began to feel won over by the *sādhū*’s strength of conviction. He could sense that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta didn’t care for anything but Lord Caitanya and that this was what made him great. This was why followers had gathered around him and why Abhay himself felt drawn, inspired, and humbled and wanted to hear more. But he felt obliged to make an argument—to test the truth.

Drawn irresistibly into discussion, Abhay spoke up in answer to the words Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had so tersely spoken in the first seconds of their meeting. "Who will hear your Caitanya's message?" Abhay queried. "We are a dependent country. First India must become independent. How can we spread Indian culture if we are under British rule?"

Abhay had not asked haughtily, just to be provocative, yet his question was clearly a challenge. If he were to take this *sādhū's* remark to them as a serious one—and there was nothing in Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's demeanor to indicate that he had not been serious—Abhay felt compelled to question how he could propose such a thing while India was still dependent.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta replied in a quiet, deep voice that Kṛṣṇa consciousness didn't have to wait for a change in Indian politics, nor was it dependent on who ruled. Kṛṣṇa consciousness was so important—so exclusively important—that it *could not wait*.

Abhay was struck by his boldness. How could he say such a thing? The whole world of India beyond this little Ultadanga rooftop was in turmoil and seemed to support what Abhay had said. Many famous leaders of Bengal, many saints, even Gandhi himself, men who were educated and spiritually minded, all might very well have asked this same question, challenging this *sādhū's* relevancy. And yet he was dismissing everything and everyone as if they were of no consequence.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta continued: Whether one power or another ruled was a temporary situation; but the eternal reality is Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and the real self is the spirit soul. No man-made political system, therefore, could actually help humanity. This was the verdict of the Vedic scriptures and the line of spiritual masters. Although everyone is an eternal servant of God, when one takes himself to be the temporary body and regards the nation of his birth as worshipable, he comes under illusion. The leaders and followers of the world's political movements, including the movement for *svarāj*, were simply cultivating this illusion. Real welfare work, whether individual, social, or political, should help prepare a person for his next life and help him reestablish his eternal relationship with the Supreme.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had articulated these ideas many times before in his writings:

There has not been, there will not be, such benefactors of the highest merit as [Chaitanya] Mahāprabhu and His devotees have been. The offer of other benefits is only a deception; it is rather a great harm, whereas the benefit done by Him and His followers is the truest and greatest eternal benefit. . . . This benefit is not for one particular country causing mischief to another; but it benefits the whole universe. . . . The kindness that Śrī Chaitanya Mahāprabhu has shown to jīvas absolves them eternally from all wants, from all inconveniences and from all the distresses. . . . That kindness does not produce any evil, and the jīvas who have it will not be the victims of the evils of the world.

As Abhay listened attentively to the arguments of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, he recalled a Bengali poet who had written that even less advanced civilizations, like China and Japan, were independent and yet India labored under political oppression. Abhay knew well the philosophy of nationalism, which stressed that Indian independence had to come first. An oppressed people was a reality, the British slaughter of innocent citizens was a reality, and independence *would* benefit people. Spiritual life was a luxury that could be afforded only after independence. In the present times, the cause of national liberation from the British was the only relevant spiritual movement. The people’s cause was in itself God.

Yet because Abhay had been raised a Vaiṣṇava, he appreciated what Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was saying. Abhay had already concluded that this was certainly not just another questionable *sādhū*, and he perceived the truth in what Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta said. This *sādhū* wasn’t concocting his own philosophy, and he wasn’t simply proud or belligerent, even though he spoke in a way that kicked out practically every other philosophy. He was speaking the eternal teachings of the Vedic literature and the sages, and Abhay loved to hear it.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, speaking sometimes in English and sometimes in Bengali, and sometimes quoting the Sanskrit verses of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, spoke of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the highest Vedic authority. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa had declared that a person should give up whatever duty he considers religious and surrender unto Him, the Personality of Godhead (*sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja*). And the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* confirmed the same thing. *Dharmaḥ projjhita-kaitavo ’tra paramo nirmatsarāṇām satām*: all other forms of religion

are impure and should be thrown out, and only *bhāgavata-dharma*, performing one's duties to please the Supreme Lord, should remain. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's presentation was so cogent that anyone who accepted the *sāstras* would have to accept his conclusion.

The people were now faithless, said Bhaktisiddhānta, and therefore they no longer believed that devotional service could remove all anomalies, even on the political scene. He went on to criticize anyone who was ignorant of the soul and yet claimed to be a leader. He even cited names of contemporary leaders and pointed out their failures, and he emphasized the urgent need to render the highest good to humanity by educating people about the eternal soul and the soul's relation to Kṛṣṇa and devotional service.

Abhay had never forgotten the worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa or His teachings in *Bhagavad-gītā*. And his family had always worshiped Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, whose mission Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was espousing. As these Gaudiya Math people worshiped Kṛṣṇa, he also had worshiped Kṛṣṇa throughout his life and had never forgotten Kṛṣṇa. But now he was astounded to hear the Vaiṣṇava philosophy presented so masterfully. Despite his involvement in college, marriage, the national movement, and other affairs, he had never forgotten Kṛṣṇa. But Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was now stirring up within him his original Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and by the words of this spiritual master not only was he remembering Kṛṣṇa, but he felt his Kṛṣṇa consciousness being enhanced a thousand times, a million times. What had been unspoken in Abhay's boyhood, what had been vague in Jagannātha Purī, what he had been distracted from at college, what he had been protected in by his father now surged forth within Abhay in responsive feelings. And he wanted to keep it.

He felt himself defeated. But he liked it. He suddenly realized that he had never before been defeated. But this defeat was not a loss. It was an immense gain.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *I was from a Vaiṣṇava family, so I could appreciate what he was preaching. Of course, he was speaking to everyone, but he found something in me. And I was convinced about his argument and mode of presentation. I was so much struck with wonder. I could understand: Here is the proper person who can give a real religious idea.*

It was late. Abhay and Naren had been talking with him for more than

two hours. One of the *brahmacārīs* gave them each a bit of *prasādam* in their open palms, and they rose gratefully and took their leave.

They walked down the stairs and onto the street. The night was dark. Here and there a light was burning, and there were some open shops. Abhay pondered in great satisfaction what he had just heard. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's explanation of the independence movement as a temporary, incomplete cause had made a deep impression on him. He felt himself less a nationalist and more a follower of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. He also thought that it would have been better if he were not married. This great personality was asking him to preach. He could have immediately joined, but he was married; and to leave his family would be an injustice.

Walking away from the *āśrama*, Naren turned to his friend: “So, Abhay, what was your impression? What do you think of him?”

“He's wonderful!” replied Abhay. “The message of Lord Caitanya is in the hands of a very expert person.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *I accepted him as my spiritual master immediately. Not officially, but in my heart. I was thinking that I had met a very nice saintly person.*

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After his first meeting with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Abhay began to associate more with the Gaudiya Math devotees. They gave him books and told him the history of their spiritual master.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was one of ten children born to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, a great Vaiṣṇava teacher in the disciplic line from Lord Caitanya Himself. Before the time of Bhaktivinoda, the teachings of Lord Caitanya had been obscured by teachers and sects falsely claiming to be followers of Lord Caitanya but deviating in various drastic ways from His pure teachings. The good reputation of Vaiṣṇavism had been compromised. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, however, through his prolific writings and through his social position as a high government officer, re-established the respectability of Vaiṣṇavism. He preached that the teachings of Lord Caitanya were the highest form of theism and were intended not for a particular sect or religion or nation but for all the people of the world. He prophesied that Lord Caitanya's teachings would go world-wide, and he yearned for it.

The religion preached by [Chaitanya] Mahāprabhu is universal and not exclusive. . . . The principle of kīrtan as the future church of the world invites all classes of men, without distinction of caste or clan, to the highest cultivation of the spirit. This church, it appears, will extend all over the world and take the place of all sectarian churches, which exclude outsiders from the precincts of the mosque, church, or temple.

Lord Chaitanya did not advent Himself to liberate only a few men of India. Rather, His main objective was to emancipate all living entities of all countries throughout the entire universe and preach the Eternal Religion. Lord Chaitanya says in the Chaitanya Bhāgavat: "In every town, country, and village, My name will be sung." There is no doubt that this unquestionable order will come to pass. . . . Although there is still no pure society of Vaiṣṇavas to be had, yet Lord Chaitanya's prophetic words will in a few days come true, I am sure. Why not? Nothing is absolutely pure in the beginning. From imperfection, purity will come about.

Oh, for that day when the fortunate English, French, Russian, German, and American people will take up banners, mridangas, and kartals and raise kīrtan through their streets and towns. When will that day come?

As a prominent magistrate, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was a responsible government officer. He served also as superintendent of the temple of Lord Jagannātha and was the father of ten children. Yet in spite of these responsibilities, he served the cause of Kṛṣṇa with prodigious energy. After coming home from his office in the evening, taking his meals, and going to bed, he would sleep from eight until midnight and then get up and write until morning. He wrote more than one hundred books during his life, many of them in English. One of his important contributions, with the cooperation of Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī and Gaurakīśora dāsa Bābājī, was to locate the exact birthplace of Lord Caitanya in Māyāpur, about sixty miles north of Calcutta.

While working to reform Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in India, he prayed to Lord Caitanya, "Your teachings have been much depreciated. It is not in my power to restore them." And he prayed for a son to help him in his preaching. When, on February 6, 1874, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was born to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in Jagannātha Purī, the Vaiṣṇavas considered him the answer to his father's prayers. He was born with the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck and draped across his chest like the sacred thread worn by *brāhmaṇas*. His parents gave him the name Bimala Prasada.

When Bimala Prasada was six months old, the carts of the Jagannātha festival stopped at the gate of Bhaktivinoda's residence and for three days could not be moved. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's wife brought the infant onto the cart and approached the Deity of Lord Jagannātha. Spontaneously, the infant extended his arms and touched the feet of Lord Jagannātha and was immediately blessed with a garland that fell from the body of the Lord. When Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura learned that the Lord's garland had fallen onto his son, he realized that this was the son for whom he had prayed.

One day, when Bimala Prasada was still a child of no more than four years, his father mildly rebuked him for eating a mango not yet duly offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Bimala Prasada, although only a child, considered himself an offender to the Lord and vowed never to eat mangoes again. (This was a vow that he would follow throughout his life.) By the time Bimala Prasada was seven years old, he had memorized the entire *Bhagavad-gītā* and could even explain its verses. His father then began training him in proofreading and printing, in conjunction with the publishing of the Vaiṣṇava magazine *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*. With his father, he visited many holy places and heard discourses from the learned *paṇḍitas*.

As a student, Bimala Prasada preferred to read the books written by his father instead of the school texts. By the time he was twenty-five he had become well versed in Sanskrit, mathematics, and astronomy, and he had established himself as the author and publisher of many magazine articles and one book, *Sūrya-siddhānta*, for which he received the epithet Siddhānta Sarasvatī in recognition of his erudition. When he was twenty-six his father guided him to take initiation from a renounced Vaiṣṇava saint, Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī, who advised him “to preach the Absolute Truth and keep aside all other works.” Receiving the blessings of Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī, Bimala Prasada (now Siddhānta Sarasvatī) resolved to dedicate his body, mind, and words to the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

In 1905 Siddhānta Sarasvatī took a vow to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* a billion times. Residing in Māyāpur in a grass hut near the birthplace of Lord Caitanya, he chanted the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* day and night. He cooked rice once a day in an earthen pot and ate nothing more; he slept on the ground, and when the rainwater leaked through the grass ceiling, he sat beneath an umbrella, chanting.

In 1911, while his aging father was lying ill, Siddhānta Sarasvatī took

up a challenge against pseudo Vaiṣṇavas who claimed that birth in their caste was the prerequisite for preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The caste-conscious *brāhmaṇa* community had become incensed by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's presentation of many scriptural proofs that anyone, regardless of birth, could become a *brāhmaṇa*-Vaiṣṇava. These *smārta brāhmaṇas*, out to prove the inferiority of the Vaiṣṇavas, arranged a discussion. On behalf of his indisposed father, young Siddhānta Sarasvatī wrote an essay, "The Conclusive Difference Between the Brāhmaṇa and the Vaiṣṇava," and submitted it before his father. Despite his poor health, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was elated to hear the arguments that would soundly defeat the challenge of the *smārtas*.

Siddhānta Sarasvatī then traveled to Midnapore, where *paṇḍitas* from all over India had gathered for a three-day discussion. Some of the *smārta paṇḍitas* who spoke first claimed that anyone born in a *śūdra* family, even though initiated by a spiritual master, could never become purified and perform the brahminical duties of worshiping the Deity or initiating disciples. Finally, Siddhānta Sarasvatī delivered his speech. He began quoting Vedic references glorifying the *brāhmaṇas*, and at this the *smārta* scholars became very much pleased. But when he began discussing the actual qualifications for becoming a *brāhmaṇa*, the qualities of the Vaiṣṇavas, the relationship between the two, and who, according to the Vedic literature, is qualified to become a spiritual master and initiate disciples, then the joy of the Vaiṣṇava-haters disappeared. Siddhānta Sarasvatī conclusively proved from the scriptures that if one is born as a *śūdra* but exhibits the qualities of a *brāhmaṇa*, then he should be honored as a *brāhmaṇa*, despite his birth. And if one is born in a *brāhmaṇa* family but acts like a *śūdra*, then he is not a *brāhmaṇa*. After his speech, Siddhānta Sarasvatī was congratulated by the president of the conference, and thousands thronged around him. It was a victory for Vaiṣṇavism.

With the passing away of his father in 1914 and his spiritual master in 1915, Siddhānta Sarasvatī continued the mission of Lord Caitanya. He assumed editorship of *Sajjana-toṣaṇī* and established the Bhagwat Press in Krishnanagar. Then in 1918, in Māyāpur, he sat down before a picture of Gaurakīśora dāsa Bābājī and initiated himself into the *sannyāsa* order. At this time he assumed the *sannyāsa* title Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was dedicated to using the printing press as the best medium for large-scale distribution of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He thought of the printing press as a *bṛhat mṛdaṅga*, a big *mṛdaṅga*. Although the *mṛdaṅga* drum had traditionally been used to accompany *kīrtana*, even during the time of Lord Caitanya, and although Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī himself led *kīrtana* parties and sent groups of devotees chanting in the streets and playing on the *mṛdaṅgas*, such *kīrtanas* could be heard only for a block or two. But with the *bṛhat mṛdaṅga*, the big *mṛdaṅga* drum of the printing press, the message of Lord Caitanya could be spread all over the world.

Most of the literature Abhay began reading had been printed on the Bhagwat Press, which Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had established in 1915. The Bhagwat Press had printed the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, with commentary by Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, with commentary by Viśvanātha Cakravartī, and, one after another, the works of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. This literature was the spiritual heritage coming from Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who had appeared almost five hundred years before.

Abhay had been a devotee of Lord Caitanya since childhood, and he was familiar with the life of Lord Caitanya through the well-known scriptures *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and *Caitanya-bhāgavata*. He had learned of Lord Caitanya not only as the most ecstatic form of a pure devotee who had spread the chanting of the holy name to all parts of India, but also as the direct appearance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself in the form of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa combined. But now, for the first time, Abhay was in touch with the great wealth of literature compiled by the Lord's immediate associates and followers, passed down in disciplic succession, and expanded on by great authorities. Lord Caitanya's immediate followers—Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, and others—had compiled many volumes based on the Vedic scriptures and proving conclusively that Lord Caitanya's teachings were the essence of Vedic wisdom. There were many books not yet published, but Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was intent on establishing many presses, just to release the sound of the *bṛhat mṛdaṅga* for the benefit of all people.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was teaching the conclusion of Lord Caitanya's teachings, that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and that the chanting of His holy name should be stressed above all

other religious practices. In former ages, other methods of attaining to God had been available, but in the present Age of Kali only the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa would be effective. On the authority of the scriptures such as the *Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa* and the *Upaniṣads*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had specifically cited the *mahā-mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself had confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā* that the only method of attaining Him was devotional service: "Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear."

Abhay knew these verses, he knew the chanting, and he knew the conclusions of the *Gītā*. But now, as he eagerly read the writings of the great *ācāryas*, he had fresh realizations of the scope of Lord Caitanya's mission. Now he was discovering the depth of his own Vaiṣṇava heritage and its efficacy for bringing about the highest welfare for people in an age destined to be full of troubles.

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Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was often traveling, and Abhay was busy with his family and business, so to arrange another meeting was not possible. Yet from their first encounter Abhay had considered Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī his spiritual master, and Abhay began thinking of him always: "I have met such a nice saintly person." Whenever possible, Abhay would seek out Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's disciples, the members of the Gaudiya Math.

As for Gandhi's movement, Gandhi had suffered a bitter setback when his nonviolent followers had blundered and committed violence during a protest. The British had taken the opportunity to arrest Gandhi and sentence him to six years in jail. Although his followers still revered him, the nationalist movement had lost much of its impetus. But regardless of that, Abhay was no longer interested. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had defeated his idea that the nationalist cause was India's first priority. He had invoked Abhay's original Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and Abhay now felt confident that Bhaktisiddhānta's mission was the real priority. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had invited him to preach, and from that moment Abhay had wanted to join the Gaudiya Math as one of Śrīla Bhakti-

siddhānta Sarasvatī's disciples. But now, instead of his political inclinations, it was his family obligations that stood in the way. He was no longer thinking, "First let us become an independent nation then preach about Lord Caitanya." Now he was thinking, "I cannot take part like the others. I have my family responsibilities."

And the family was growing. In 1921 Abhay and his wife had had their first child, a son. And there would be more children, and more income would be needed. Earning money meant sacrificing time and energy, and it meant, at least externally, being distracted from the mission of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Indian culture had the highest regard for the family institution, and divorce was unheard of. Even if a man was in great financial difficulty, he would remain with his wife and children. Although Abhay expressed regret at not being a *sannyāsī* disciple in the Gaudiya Math, he never seriously considered leaving his young wife so early in their marriage. Gour Mohan was pleased to hear of his son's attraction to a Vaiṣṇava *guru*, but he never expected Abhay to abandon responsibilities and enter the renounced order. A Vaiṣṇava could remain with wife and family, practice spiritual life at home, and even become active in preaching. Abhay would have to find ways to serve the mission of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī as a family man.

Abhay thought that if he were to become very successful in business, then he could spend money not only to support his family but also to help support Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's mission of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. An astrologer had even predicted that Abhay would become one of the wealthiest men in India. But with his present income he could do little more than provide for his family's needs. He thought he might do better by trying to develop a business on his own.

Abhay expressed his feelings to Dr. Bose, who listened like a sympathetic father and suggested that Abhay become his agent for all of northern India. Abhay could purchase medicines, liniments, rectified spirits, toothpastes, and other items wholesale from Dr. Bose's factory and travel widely throughout northern India, building up his own business. Also, Abhay had enough experience with Bose's Laboratory that he could try to make and market some of his own medicines and products. Dr. Bose and Abhay decided that the centrally located city of Allahabad would be a good place for Abhay to make his headquarters.

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In 1923, Abhay and his wife and child moved to Allahabad, a twelve-hour train ride northwest from Calcutta. The British had once made Allahabad the capital of the United Provinces, and they had built many good buildings there, including buildings for a high court and a university. Europeans and affluent Indian families like the Nehrus lived in a modern, paved, well-lit section of town. There was also another, older section, with ancient narrow streets closely lined with buildings and shops. Many Bengalis resided there, and it was there that Abhay decided to settle his family.

He had chosen Allahabad, traditionally known as Prayāga, as a good location for business, but it was also one of India's most famous places of pilgrimage. Situated at the confluence of the three holiest rivers of India—the Ganges, the Yamunā, and the Sarasvatī—Allahabad was the site of two of India's most widely attended spiritual events, the annual Māgha-melā, and the Kumbha-melā, which took place every twelve years. And in search of spiritual purification, millions of pilgrims from all over India would converge here each year at the time of the full moon in the month of Māgha (January) and bathe at the junction of the three sacred rivers.

Abhay's home at 60 Badshahi Mundi consisted of a few rented rooms. For his business he rented a small shop in the commercial center of the city at Johnston Gung Road, where he opened his dispensary, Prayag Pharmacy, and began selling medicines, tinctures, syrups, and other products manufactured by Bose's Laboratory. He met an Allahabad physician, Dr. Ghosh, who was interested in a business partnership, so Abhay asked him to become his attending physician and move his office to Prayag Pharmacy. Dr. Ghosh consented and closed his own shop, Tropical Pharmacy.

At Prayag Pharmacy, Dr. Ghosh would diagnose patients and give medical prescriptions, which Abhay would fill. Dr. Ghosh would then receive a twenty-five-percent commission from the sale of the prescriptions. Abhay and Dr. Ghosh became friends; they would visit at each other's home, and they treated each other's children like their own family members. Often they discussed their aspirations for increasing profits.

Dr. Ghosh: *Abhay was a business-minded man. We were all God-fearing, of course. In every home we have a small temple, and we must*

have Deities. But he used to always talk about business and how to meet family expenses.

Although at home Abhay wore a *kurtā* and *dhotī*, sometimes for business he would dress in shirt and pants. He was a good-looking, full-mustached, energetic young man in his late twenties. He and Radharani De now had two children—a daughter was born after they had been in Allahabad one year. Gour Mohan, who was now seventy-five, had come to live with him, as had Abhay’s widowed sister, Rajesvari, and her son, Tulasi. Gour Mohan mostly stayed at home, chanted on his beads, and worshiped the *śālagrāma-śilā* Deity of Kṛṣṇa. He was satisfied that Abhay was doing right, and Abhay was satisfied to have his father living comfortably with him and freely worshiping Kṛṣṇa.

Abhay led a busy life. He was intent on building his business. By 8:00 A.M. he would go to his pharmacy, where he would meet Dr. Ghosh and begin his day’s work. At noon he would come home, and then he would return to the pharmacy in the late afternoon. He had purchased a large Buick for eight thousand rupees, and although he never drove it himself, he let his nephew, a good driver, use it for his taxi business. Occasionally, Abhay would use the car on his own business excursions, and his nephew would then act as his chauffeur.

It so happened that both Motilal Nehru and his son Jawaharlal were customers at Prayag Pharmacy. Because Jawaharlal would always order Western medicines, Abhay thought he must have felt that Indian ways were inferior. Once, Jawaharlal approached Abhay for a political contribution, and Abhay donated, being a conscientious merchant. During the day, Abhay would talk with his customers and other friends who would stop by, and they would tell him many things. A former military officer used to tell Abhay stories of World War I. He told how Marshal Foch in France had one day ordered the killing of thousands of Belgian refugees whose maintenance had become a burden to him on the battlefield. A Muhammadan gentleman, a member of a royal family in Afghanistan, would come daily with his son to sit and chat. Abhay would listen to his visitors and converse pleasantly and make up their prescriptions, but his thoughts kept returning to his meeting with Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī. He went over it again and again in his mind—how he had looked, his mannerisms, what he had said.

At night Abhay would go home to his wife and children. Radharani

was a chaste and faithful wife who spent her days cooking, cleaning, and caring for her two children. But she was not inclined to share her husband's interest in things spiritual. He could not convey to her his feelings about Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

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Abhay; his wife; their two children; Gour Mohan; Abhay's younger brother, Krishna Charan; Abhay's widowed sister, Rajesvari; and her son, Tulasi das, all went together to an Allahabad studio for a family portrait. The photo shows Abhay in his late twenties. He is thin and dark, with a full mustache. His forehead is broad, his eyes dark and clear. He wears a white *kurtā* and *dhotī* and plain dark slippers. He sits in a chair, his wife standing behind him, an attractive young woman in a white *khādī sārī* with a line of color on the border. Her slim arm rests behind Abhay's head on the back of his chair, her small hand gripping the edge of the chair. Her left hand hangs by her side, gripped in a fist. She is barefoot. With his left hand, Abhay steadies his two-year-old boy, "Pacha" (Prayag Raj), a glaring infant, on his lap, the boy seeming to squirm, his baby legs and bare feet dangling by his mother's knee. Abhay seems a bit amused by the son on his lap. Abhay is a handsome Indian man, his wife an attractive woman, both young.

Also behind Abhay stands his nephew Tulasi and his brother, Krishna Charan. Sitting on the far right is Abhay's sister Rajesvari, dressed in a widow's white *sārī*, holding Sulakshmana, Abhay's daughter, on her lap. Sulakshmana is also squirming, her foot jutting towards the photographer. In the center sits Gour Mohan. His face is shriveled, and his whole body is emaciated with age. He is also wearing a white *kurtā* and *dhotī*. His hands seem to be moving actively on his lap, perhaps with palsy. He is short and small and old.

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Abhay traveled frequently throughout northern India, intent on expanding his sales. It was not unusual for him to be gone a few days in a week, and sometimes a week or more at a time, as he traveled from one city to another. The pharmaceutical industry was just beginning in India,

and doctors, hospitals, and pharmacies were eager to buy from the competent, gentlemanly agent who called on them from Bose's Laboratory of Calcutta.

He would travel by train and stay in hotels. He liked the feeling of freedom from home that traveling afforded, but the real drive was servicing accounts and getting new ones; that was his business. Riding in a third-class unreserved compartment was often uncomfortable; the only seats were benches, which were often dirty, and passengers were permitted to crowd on without reservations. But that is how Abhay traveled, hundreds of miles every week. As the train moved between towns, he would see the numberless small villages and then the country land that spread out before him on either side of the tracks. At every stop, he would hear the cries of the tea vendors as they walked alongside the train windows: "*Chāy! Chāy!*" Tea! The British had introduced it, and now millions of Indians were convinced that they could not get through the morning without their little glass of hot tea. As a strict Vaiṣṇava, Abhay never touched it, but his wife, much to his displeasure, was becoming a regular tea drinker.

Although Abhay was accustomed to dressing as a European businessman, he never compromised his strict Vaiṣṇava principles. Most of his fellow Bengalis had taken up fish-eating, but Abhay was always careful to avoid non-Vaiṣṇava foods, even at hotels. Once at a vegetarian hotel, the Empire Hindu Hotel in Bombay, he was served onions, and sometimes hotel people tried to serve him mushrooms, garlic, and even eggs, but all of these he carefully avoided. Keeping a small semblance of his home routine, he would take his bath early in the morning with cold water. He followed this routine year-round, and when, in Saharanpur, he did so during the bitter cold weather, the hotelkeeper was greatly surprised.

Abhay conversed with many people in his travels. A doctor in Dacca told him that on his way to the office he had passed a farmer talking to a friend and could tell by the sound of the farmer's cough that the farmer would die within a few hours. Another doctor told Abhay that he had just come from seeing a pneumonia patient who was defying nature and medical science by continuing to live. He met a Muhammadan doctor in Gayā who lamented that he had just lost a patient, although he had given the man the very best medicine. Such accounts from men of the medical

profession confirmed Abhay's conviction that without God's sanction no one could be saved. Not that he ever thought of his medical sales as philanthropic work; Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had already convinced him that the only way to save a person was by giving him Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Abhay's medical products were strictly for business.

On one business trip—it was in 1925—he traveled through Agra, only forty miles south of Vṛndāvana. Taking the opportunity, he made his first visit to holy Vṛndāvana, fulfilling his childhood aspiration. He loved the sight of Vṛndāvana, but he could spend only a day or two; even a single day away from his sales work could be critical. As a reverent pilgrim, Abhay visited a few temples, especially the principal temples established by the followers of Lord Caitanya. But he had to move on.

There were also risks in traveling. Once he was sitting in a train compartment in Mathurā station when a monkey suddenly entered and took away his belongings. Early one morning before dawn, while he was on his way to Kanpur in a two-wheeled horse carriage, the horse was going at a fast trot when suddenly it hit a large heap of rubbish in the middle of the road. The carriage turned upside down, horse, driver, and carriage all landed in a heap, and Abhay was thrown into the air. But he landed unharmed, feeling as though he had just changed to another seat. Because Abhay sat but said nothing, the driver thought he had been knocked unconscious and became anxious. The passenger was all right, however, and the driver considered it a miracle, since the cart had so violently ejected him. Abhay took it that he had been saved by Kṛṣṇa, and he remembered similar incidents, starting with his childhood when his clothing had caught on fire. Kṛṣṇa had always protected him.

For five years Abhay traveled widely out of Allahabad, and when he was home he put in long hours at the dispensary. But he also spent time with his wife and played with his children.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *When my son was about two years old, he was very naughty, always doing some mischief. My friends used to visit me and call my son, Pacha. "Pacha, if you sit down for one minute, silently, I will give you a gift." But the boy failed. He could not sit down, even for a minute. There was a table fan, and Pacha was wanting to touch it. I said, "No, no, don't touch." But again he tried to touch it, so my friend said, "Just lower the speed and let him touch it." So I unplugged the fan, and then he touched it. It did not harm him, but it hit his finger with a loud*

noise, “Tunng!” And then he would not touch again. I would ask him, “Touch again?” but he would not.

As soon as his daughter, Sulakshmana, could speak, he began teaching her the Bengali translation of the prayer *Gurv-aṣṭakam*, which begins, “The spiritual master is receiving benedictions from the ocean of mercy. Just as a cloud pours water on a forest fire to extinguish it, the spiritual master extinguishes the blazing fire of material life, of repeated birth and death.”

Except for his obligatory travels, Abhay stayed at home and satisfied his family. He tended diligently to his business, and it prospered.

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It was Kumbha-melā, January 1928. Bhaktipradīpa Tīrtha Mahārāja of the Gaudiya Math had come to Allahabad with a few men. One day he walked unannounced into the Prayag Pharmacy, and all of a sudden Abhay was seeing them again, after so many years. “Oh, these are the people I saw before!” he thought. “Gaudiya Math. Yes, come in.”

Bhaktipradīpa Tīrtha Swami was the same *sannyāsī* who had visited Narendranath Mullik in Calcutta, a visit that had led to Abhay’s going to visit Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Folding his palms in a humble gesture, standing before Abhay in simple saffron *khādī* robes, his shaven head, with a tuft of *śikhā* in the back, his forehead marked with Vaiṣṇava *tilaka*, Tīrtha Mahārāja said to Abhay, “We are new here. We are going to establish a temple in Allahabad. We have heard your name, so we have come to you. Please help us.”

Abhay was joyful: “Yes, I will help you.” He contributed what money he could and then introduced Tīrtha Mahārāja to Dr. Ghosh, who also contributed.

Abhay invited the Gaudiya Math devotees to come to his home and hold a *bhajana* and lecture; his wife would cook *prasādam*. They accepted, but when they arrived there was a misunderstanding. Gour Mohan, who was invalid, was staying in his room upstairs. “Please come down,” Abhay called. “There’s a meeting of the Gaudiya Math.” Gour Mohan came downstairs, but when he saw the *sādhus* he mistook them for impersonalists from a nondevotional mission. He had not heard correctly what Abhay had said. Gour Mohan took his seat, but he observed

the saffron-clothed men sullenly and even made a critical remark. Abhay, who was enlivened at the opportunity to associate with the Vaiṣṇavas and hear from them *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, could not understand his father's behavior. Then, as soon as Bhaktipradīpa Tīrtha Swami began his lecture, Gour Mohan understood. "Oh, they are Vaiṣṇavas!" he cried. Old and invalid as he was, he immediately fell down at their feet: "I misunderstood you, sir. I thought you were *sannyāsīs* from another mission. I am glad to meet you."

After Kumbha-melā, Pradīpa Tīrtha Swami left, but five or six *brahmacārī* disciples of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī stayed on in Allahabad, maintaining a small *maṭha* headquarters. They worshiped the Deity, held an evening program of *kīrtana* and lecture, and preached actively to the local people. The devotee in charge, Atulānanda Brahmacārī, would visit the homes of Allahabad citizens, trying to solicit subscriber members for the *maṭha*; for half a rupee per month, a person would receive a subscription to the Gaudiya Math magazine.

In the course of his door-to-door soliciting, Atulānanda knocked on the door of Abhay Charan De. Abhay received him very hospitably and offered him some rice and fruit. Abhay was very receptive to the philosophy and relished discussions with Atulānanda, who made it a point to visit Mr. De repeatedly and speak with him about Lord Caitanya and the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Abhay also inquired into the recent activities of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. By now, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had established the Gaudiya Printing Works in Calcutta and had begun to publish the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, in several volumes with his own annotations. He had also published an edited version of *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata* from his center in Dacca. He had opened centers in Bhubaneswar, Madras, and Puri.

Abhay's interest was insatiable. Atulānanda told him how in 1925 Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had led a big procession, circumambulating the holy land of Navadvīpa, with Deities riding on the backs of gorgeously decorated elephants, and with devotees from all parts of India attending. Envious professional priests who opposed Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's acceptance of disciples from all castes had employed a gang to help them hurl bricks and rocks on the procession. But Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had continued, undaunted. In 1926 he had toured throughout India, preaching the message of Lord Caitanya. He had also installed

Deities in the large temple of Śrī Caitanya Math in Māyāpur. And a year ago he had begun publishing his magazine *Sajjana-toṣaṇī* in three languages, including an English edition called *The Harmonist*.

After several visits and hours of discussion on the activities and philosophy of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, Atulānanda brought Mr. De to the Allahabad *āśrama*. Shortly thereafter, the *maṭha* relocated to a rented house on South Mallaca Street near Ram Bagh, just a short walk from Abhay’s house. Now it was possible for Abhay to visit every evening. After work, he would attend the *maṭha*, where he would play the *mṛdaṅga*, surprising the *brahmacārīs* with his already developed *mṛdaṅga*-playing skills. He sang *bhajanās* with them and sometimes took the lead part in the congregational singing. He would also bring important persons from Allahabad to visit the *maṭha*. For the *brahmacārīs*, Abhay seemed to give new life to their *āśrama*, and for Abhay new life had come to him in his reunion with the disciples of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

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In 1930 Gour Mohan’s health took a turn for the worse, and his family members gathered around him, thinking that his end had come. Abhay had been in Bombay on business, and it was late when he reached Allahabad and knocked on the door. Gour Mohan told his daughter Rajesvari, “Open the door. Abhay has come.” She replied, “No, he is in Bombay.” Gour Mohan repeated, “I tell you that he has come. You open the door!” It was about midnight. She went downstairs, opened the door, and found that her brother had indeed come. Abhay went to his father: “How are you?”

“I am all right,” Gour Mohan replied. “You just take rest for the night.”

The next morning Abhay called the doctor. “How your father is living we don’t know,” the doctor told him. “He has practically no pulse. He has been living without food for several months.”

Abhay asked his father, “What is your wish? Tell me.”

“Why are you asking?” his father replied. “Has the doctor told you anything?”

Abhay said, “No, I am asking because I am staying in Bombay and you

are here. So if you have any wish, any intention, let me know. I am here. I am here for you." Gour Mohan told him to give their cow to the Allahabad Gaudiya Math. So Abhay took the cow, along with her calf, and donated them to the *maṭha*.

Then again he asked his father, "Have you got any other wish?"

And again his father asked, "Has the doctor told you anything?"

"No, no! I am simply asking because for my business I have to go."

Then Gour Mohan said, "Invite all the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas of Allahabad, and other Vaiṣṇavas also. Let them chant *hari-nāma* in the evening, and you supply them with good food. That is my wish." Abhay arranged it, and in the evening the *hari-nāma* started. At eleven o'clock all of them took *prasādam* and left. That night, Gour Mohan passed away.

Abhay felt the loss of his father painfully. His father had given him everything he had ever wanted, had been careful to raise him as a pure Vaiṣṇava, and had always worshiped Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Although Abhay was a competent young man, he felt lost without his dearest protector and friend. More than anyone else, Gour Mohan was the one who had always guided Abhay and treated him as the most special person. Without his father, Abhay now felt hopeless. He suddenly felt the same dependency he had felt as a small boy—but now without his father. The one who had always treated him as a pet son deserving all loving attention, the one who had given him whatever he had wanted and who had literally prayed to every holy man he met that his son become a great devotee of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī—that best well-wisher was now gone.

On the day of *śrāddha*, thirteen days after Gour Mohan passed away, Abhay and his brother posed for a formal photograph. In accordance with the religious custom, the two sons had shaved their heads. The photograph shows Abhay and his brother sitting on either side of a formal portrait of their father. The portrait is on an elevated stand and is surrounded with dark cloth. The picture is nicely framed. Gour Mohan looks old but still thoughtful and intent—not so old as in the former portrait, where he had looked emaciated, with eyes almost dimmed.

Abhay, with his head shaved, looks like a renounced monk, and his body is covered with the robes of a monk, simple drapes in broad folds covering the upper and lower parts of his body. He looks quite different than he had in the picture that was taken in the same place, with the

same rough carpet on the floor, years before. In that picture, with his wife and children gathered around him, he was very much the young householder, surrounded by his responsibilities of family and looking like he knew how to conduct himself well and move energetically in the world. But in this photo, although his children are present, they are seated unattended on the floor. Abhay's left hand is on his knee, poised and yet at rest, whereas in the former picture, his left hand had been holding his restless son. Abhay's wife is not present.

In this picture, Abhay looks striking. One cannot tell that he usually has a head of hair and a mustache, which he has only recently shorn for the mournful observance of his father's passing away. Instead, this seems to be his natural appearance. There is a mysterious, spiritual air about him, as one might expect in a meditating saint. His look is neither agitated nor cheerful nor sorrowful. It is peaceful and knowing, as if he has suddenly become a *sādhū* on the day his father has passed away. He looks like the *sādhū* his father envisioned he would become. He looks as if he is and always was a *sādhū* and has suddenly been revealed as such on this day. Even by the most casual inspection of the photo, it appears that by shaving his head and dressing in robes, with no shirt or shoes, Abhay has become a *sādhū*.



CHAPTER FOUR

“How Shall I Serve You?”

I have every hope that you can turn yourself into a very good English preacher if you serve the mission to inculcate the novel impression of Lord Chaitanya's teachings to the people in general as well as philosophers and religionists.

—Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī
in a letter to Śrīla Prabhupāda,
December 1936

In October of 1932, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī led a group of hundreds of disciples and pilgrims on a month-long *parikrama*, or circumambulation, of the sacred places of Vṛndāvana. Vṛndāvana residents and visitors perform *parikrama* by following the old, dry bed of the Yamunā River and circumambulating the Vṛndāvana area, stopping at the places where Kṛṣṇa performed His pastimes when He roamed in Vṛndāvana five thousand years ago. Abhay had wanted to attend Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's *parikrama* but couldn't because of his work. Nevertheless, on the twentieth day of the pilgrimage he traveled from Allahabad, intent on seeing Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī again and hoping to join the *parikrama* party at Kosi, just outside Vṛndāvana, at least for a day.

The *parikrama* Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had organized was one of the biggest ever seen in Vṛndāvana. By engaging so many people, he was using the *parikrama* as a method of mass preaching. Even as early as 1918, when he had first begun his missionary work, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's specific contribution had been his emphasis on preaching.

Prior to his advent, the Vaiṣṇavas had generally avoided populated places, and they had performed their worship in holy, secluded places like Vṛndāvana. Even when they had traveled to preach, they would maintain the simple mode of the impoverished mendicant. The Gosvāmī followers during Lord Caitanya's time had lived in Vṛndāvana underneath trees; one night under one tree, the next night under another.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, whose aim was on preaching worldwide, knew that the renunciation of the Gosvāmīs was not possible for Westerners; therefore he wanted to introduce the idea that devotees could even live in a big palatial temple. He had accepted a large donation from a wealthy Vaiṣṇava merchant and in 1930 had constructed a large marble temple in the Baghbazar section of Calcutta. In the same year, he had moved, along with many followers, from his small rented quarters at Ultadanga to the impressive new headquarters.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was demonstrating that although a devotee should not spend a cent for his own sense gratification, he could spend millions of rupees for the service of Kṛṣṇa. While previously Vaiṣṇavas would not have had anything to do with the mechanized contrivances introduced by the British, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, on the authority of scripture, was demonstrating a higher understanding. It was Rūpa Gosvāmī, the great disciple of Lord Caitanya, who had written, "One is perfectly detached from all materialistic worldly entanglement not when one gives up everything but when one employs everything for the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. This is understood to be perfect renunciation in *yoga*." If everything is God's energy, then why should anything be given up? If God is good, then His energy is also good; material things should not be used for one's own sense enjoyment, but they could be and *should* be used for the service of Kṛṣṇa. So Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta wanted to use the most modern printing presses. He wanted to invite worldly people to hear *kṛṣṇa-kathā* in gorgeously built temples. And, for their preaching, devotees should not hesitate to ride in the best conveyances, wear sewn cloth, or live amidst material opulence.

It was in this spirit that he had constructed the building at Baghbazar and there displayed a theistic exhibition, a series of dioramas assembled from finely finished, painted, and dressed clay dolls. Such dolls are a traditional art form in Bengal, but the staging of nearly one hundred elaborate displays depicting the Vaiṣṇava philosophy and the pastimes of

Lord Kṛṣṇa had never before been seen. The theistic exhibition created a sensation, and thousands attended it daily.

In that same year, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had taken about forty disciples on a *parikrama* all over India, a tour featuring many public lectures and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's meetings with important men. By 1932 he had three presses in different parts of India printing six journals in various Indian dialects.

In Calcutta a politician had asked Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī how he could possibly print his *Nadiyā Prakāśa* as a *daily* newspaper. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had replied that it was not so amazing if one considered that in Calcutta alone there were almost half a dozen ordinary daily newspapers, although Calcutta was but one city amongst all the cities of India, India was but one nation amongst many nations on the earth, the earth was but an insignificant planet amidst all the other planets in the universe, this universe was one amongst universes so numerous that each was like a single mustard seed in a big bag of mustard seeds, and the entire material creation was only one small fraction of the creation of God. *Nadiyā Prakāśa* was not printing the news of Calcutta or the earth but news from the unlimited spiritual sky, which is much greater than all the material worlds combined. So if the daily Calcutta newspapers could report limited earthly tidings, then small wonder that *Nadiyā Prakāśa* could appear daily. In fact, a newspaper about the spiritual world could be printed every moment, were there not a shortage of interested readers.

One of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's publications was in English, *The Harmonist*, and it advertised the Vṛndāvana *parikrama* of 1932.

CIRCUMAMBULATION OF SHRI BRAJA MANDAL

His Divine Grace Paramahansa Shri Shrimad Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Goswami Maharaj, the spiritual head of the Madhva-Gaudiya Vaishnava community, following Shri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, has been pleased to invite the co-operation of all persons of every nationality, irrespective of caste, creed, colour, age, or sex, in the devotional function of circumambulation of the holy sphere of Braja in the footsteps of the Supreme Lord Shri Krishna Chaitanya, Who exhibited the leela of performing the circumambulation of Shri Braja Mandal during the winter of 1514 A.D.

When Abhay had heard from the members of the Allahabad Gaudiya Math about the *parikrama*, he had been fully occupied with his local Prayag Pharmacy business and traveling to secure new accounts. But he had calculated how he could join at least for a day or two, and he had fixed his mind on again obtaining the *darśana* of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *I was not initiated at the time of the parikrama, but I had very good admiration for these Gaudiya Math people. They were very kind to me, so I thought, "What are these people doing in this parikrama? Let me go." So I met them at Kosi.*

The *parikrama* party traveled with efficient organization. An advance group, bringing all the bedding and tents, would go ahead to the next day's location, where they would make camp and set up the kitchen. Meanwhile, the main party, bearing the Deity of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and accompanied by *kīrtana* singers, would visit the places of Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and in the evening arrive in camp.

The camp was divided into sections and arranged in a semicircle, and pilgrims were assigned to a particular section for the night. In the center were the quarters of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta and the Deity of Lord Caitanya, and close by, the tents of the *sannyāsīs*. There were separate camps for ladies and men—married couples did not stay together. There was also a volunteer corps of guards who stayed up all night, patrolling the area. At night the camp, with its hundreds of tents with gaslights and campfires, resembled a small town, and local people would come to see, astonished at the arrangements. In the evening, everyone would gather to hear a discourse by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

The pilgrims would rise early each morning and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa together. Then, carrying the Deity of Lord Caitanya, they would set out in procession—*kīrtana* groups, the police band, the lead horse, the flag bearers, and all the pilgrims. They traveled to the holy places: the birthplace of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the place where Lord Kṛṣṇa slew Kāṁsa, the Ādi-keśava temple, Rādhā-kuṇḍa, Śyāma-kuṇḍa, and many others.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's massive pilgrimage had been rolling on with great success when he met with serious opposition. The local temple proprietors in Vṛndāvana objected to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's awarding the sacred brahminical thread to devotees not born in the families of *brāhmaṇas*. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, throughout his lectures

and writings, had repeatedly proven from the Vedic scriptures that one is a *brāhmaṇa* not by birth but by qualities. He often cited a verse from Sanātana Gosvāmī’s *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* stating that just as base metal when mixed with mercury can become gold, so an ordinary man can become a *brāhmaṇa* if initiated by a bona fide spiritual master. He also often cited a verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in which the great sage Nārada tells King Yudhiṣṭhira that if one is born in the family of a *śūdra* but acts as a *brāhmaṇa* he has to be accepted as a *brāhmaṇa*, and if one is born in the family of a *brāhmaṇa* but acts as a *śūdra* he is to be considered a *śūdra*. Because the prime method of spiritual advancement in the Age of Kali is the chanting of the holy name of God, any person who chants Hare Kṛṣṇa should be recognized as a saintly person.

When the local *paṇḍitas* approached Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī for discussion, they questioned his leniency in giving initiation and his awarding the brahminical thread and *sannyāsa* dress to persons of lower castes. Because of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī’s scholarly, forceful presentation, the *paṇḍitas* seemed satisfied by the discussion, but when the *parikrama* party arrived at Vṛndāvana’s seven main temples, which had been erected by the immediate followers of Lord Caitanya, the party found the doors closed. Vṛndāvana shopkeepers closed their businesses, and some people even threw stones at the passing pilgrims. But the *parikrama* party, led by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, continued in good spirits, despite the animosity, and on October 28 the party arrived at Kosi, the site of the treasury of Kṛṣṇa’s father, King Nanda.

Abhay arrived in Mathurā by train from Allahabad and approached Kosi by ricksha. The countryside was full of charm for Abhay; instead of factories and large buildings there were mostly forests, and aside from the main paved road on which he traveled, there were only dirt roads and soft sandy lanes. As a Vaiṣṇava, Abhay felt sensations an ordinary man wouldn’t. Now and then he sighted a peacock in the field, its exotic plumage proclaiming the glories of Vṛndāvana and Kṛṣṇa. Even a non-devotee, however, could appreciate the many varieties of birds, their interesting cries and songs filling the air. Occasionally a tree would be filled with madly chirping sparrows making their urgent twilight clamor before resting for the night. Even one unaware of the special significance

of Vṛndāvana could feel a relief of mind in this simple countryside where people built fires from cow manure fuel and cooked their evening meals in the open, their fires adding rich, natural smells to the indefinable mixture which was the odor of the earth. There were many gnarled old trees and colorful stretches of flowers—bushes of bright violet camelia, trees abloom with delicate white *pārijāta* blossoms, and big yellow *kadamba* flowers, rarely seen outside Vṛndāvana.

On the road there was lively horse-drawn *ṭāṅgā* traffic. The month of Kārttika, October-November, was one of the several times of the year that drew many pilgrims to Vṛndāvana. The one-horse *ṭāṅgās* carried large families, some coming from hundreds of miles away. Larger bands of pilgrims, grouped by village, walked together, the women dressed in bright-colored *sārīs*, brown-skinned men and women sometimes singing *bhajanās*, carrying but a few simple possessions as they headed for the town of thousands of temples, Vṛndāvana. And there were businessmen like Abhay, dressed more formally, coming from a city, maybe to spend the weekend. Most of them had at least some semblance of a religious motive—to see Kṛṣṇa in the temple, to bathe in the holy Yamunā River, to visit the sites where Lord Kṛṣṇa had performed His pastimes such as the lifting of Govardhana Hill, the killing of the Keśī demon, or the dancing in the evening with the *gopīs*.

Abhay was sensitive to the atmosphere of Vṛndāvana, and he noted the activity along the road. But more than that, he cherished with anticipation the fulfillment of his journey—his meeting again, after a long separation, the saintly person he had always thought of within himself, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, who had spoken to him in Calcutta and had convinced him of Lord Caitanya's mission to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Abhay would soon see him again, and this purpose filled his mind.

Upon reaching the lantern-illuminated camp of the Gaudiya Math and inquiring at the registration post, he was allowed to join the *parikrama* village. He was assigned to a tent of *gr̥hastha* men and was offered *prasādam*. The people were friendly and in good spirits, and Abhay talked of his activities with the *maṭha* members in Calcutta and Allahabad. Then there was a gathering—a *sannyāsī* was making an announcement. This evening, he said, there would be a scheduled visit to a nearby temple to see the Deity of Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu. Some of the pilgrims cheered, "Haribol! Hare Kṛṣṇa!" The *sannyāsī* also announced that His

Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura would speak that evening for the last time and would be leaving the *parikrama* party the next day. So there was a choice of going on the *parikrama* or staying for the lecture.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So I met them in Kosi, and Keśava Mahārāja was informing that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta is going to Mathurā tomorrow morning and he will speak hari-kathā this evening. Anyone who wants to may remain. Or otherwise they may go to see Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu. So at that time I think only ten or twelve men remained—Śrīdhara Mahārāja was one of them. And I thought it wise, “What can I see at this Śeṣaśāyī? Let me hear what Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī will speak. Let me hear.”

When Abhay arrived, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was already speaking. He sat with his back erect, a shawl around his shoulders, not speaking like a professional lecturer giving a scheduled performance, but addressing a small gathering in his room. At last Abhay was in his presence again. Abhay marveled to see and hear him, this unique soul possessed of *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, speaking uninterruptedly about Kṛṣṇa in his deep, low voice, in ecstasy and deep knowledge. Abhay sat and heard with rapt attention.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had been speaking regularly about *sambandha*, *abhidheya*, and *prayojana*. *Sambandha* is the stage of devotional service in which awareness of God is awakened, *abhidheya* is rendering loving service to the Lord, and *prayojana* is the ultimate goal, pure love of God. He stressed that his explanations were in exact recapitulation of what had originally been spoken by Kṛṣṇa and passed down through disciplic succession. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī’s particular utterance, mostly Bengali but sometimes English, with frequent quoting of Sanskrit from the *sāstras*, was deep with erudition. “It is Kṛṣṇa,” said Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, “who is the only Superlord over the entire universe and, beyond it, of Vaikuṇṭha, the transcendental region. As such, no one can raise any obstacle against His enjoyment.”

An hour went by, two hours. . . . The already small gathering in Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta’s room gradually thinned. A few *sannyāsīs* left, excusing themselves to tend to duties connected with the *parikrama* camp. Only a few intimate leaders remained. Abhay was the only outsider. Of course, he was a devotee, not an outsider, but in the sense that he was not a *sannyāsī*, was not handling any duties, was not even initiated, and was

not traveling with the *parikrama* but had joined only for a day—in that sense he was an outsider. The philosophy Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was speaking, however, was democratically open to whoever would give an ardent hearing. And that Abhay was doing.

He was listening with wonder. Sometimes he would not even understand something, but he would go on listening intently, submissively, his intelligence drinking in the words. He felt Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī revealing to him the direct vision of the spiritual world, just as a person reveals something by opening a door or pushing aside a curtain. He was revealing the reality, and this reality was loving service to the lotus feet of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, the supremely worshipable Personality of Godhead. How masterfully he spoke! And with utter conviction and boldness!

It was with such awe that Abhay listened with fastened attention. Of course, all Vaiṣṇavas accepted Kṛṣṇa as their worshipable Lord, but how conclusively and with what sound logic was the faith of the Vaiṣṇavas established by this great teacher! After several hours, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī stopped speaking. Abhay felt prepared to go on listening without cessation, and yet he had no puzzling doubts or queries to place forward. He wanted only to hear more. As Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta made his exit, Abhay bowed, offering his obeisances, and then left the intimate circle of *sannyāsīs* in their row of tents and went to the outer circle of tents, his mind surcharged with the words of his spiritual master.

Now their relationship seemed more tangible. He still treasured his original impression of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, the saintly person who had spoken to him on the rooftop in Calcutta; but tonight that single impression that had sustained him for years in Allahabad had been enriched and filled with new life. His spiritual master and the impression of his words were as much a reality as the stars in the sky and the moon over Vṛndāvana. That impression of hearing from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was filling him with its reality, and all other reality was forming itself around the absolute reality of Śrīla Gurudeva, just as all the planets circle around the sun.

The next morning, Abhay was up with the others more than an hour before dawn, bathed, and chanting *mantras* in congregation. Later in the morning the tall, stately figure of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī,

dressed in plain saffron, got into the back seat of a car and rode away from the camp. Thoughtful and grave, he looked back and waved, accepting the loving farewell gestures of his followers. Abhay stood amongst them.

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A little more than a month later, Abhay was again anticipating an imminent meeting with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, this time at Allahabad. Abhay had only recently returned from Vṛndāvana to his work at Prayag Pharmacy when the devotees at the Allahabad Gaudiya Math informed him of the good news. They had secured land and funds for constructing a building, the Śrī Rūpa Gaudiya Math, and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta would be coming on November 21 to preside over the ceremony for the laying of the cornerstone. Sir William Malcolm Haily, governor of the United Provinces, would be the respected guest and, in a grand ceremony, would lay the foundation stone in the presence of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta. When Abhay learned that there would also be an initiation ceremony, he asked if he could be initiated. Atulānanda, the *maṭha*’s president, assured Abhay that he would introduce him to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

At home, Abhay discussed his initiation plans with his wife. She had no objection, but she did not want to take initiation herself. They were already worshipping the Deity at home and offering their food to the Deity. They believed in God and were living peacefully.

But for Abhay that was not enough. Although he would not force his wife, he knew that *he* must be initiated by a pure devotee. Avoiding sinful life, living piously—these things were necessary and good, but in themselves they did not constitute spiritual life and could not satisfy the yearning of the soul. Life’s ultimate goal and the absolute necessity of the self was love of Kṛṣṇa. That love of Kṛṣṇa his father had already inculcated within him, and now he had to take the next step. His father would have been pleased to see him do it.

What he had learned from his father was now being solidified by someone capable of guiding all the fallen souls of the world to transcendental love of God. Abhay knew he should go forward and take complete shelter in the instructions of his spiritual master. And the scriptures enjoined, “He who is desirous of knowing the Absolute Truth must take

shelter of a spiritual master who is in disciplic succession and who is fixed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness." Even Lord Caitanya, who was Kṛṣṇa Himself, had accepted a spiritual master, and only after initiation did He manifest the full symptoms of ecstatic love of Kṛṣṇa while chanting the holy name.

As for the ritual initiation he had received at age twelve from a family priest, Abhay had never taken it very seriously. It had been a religious formality. But a *guru* was not a mere officiating ritualistic priest; so Abhay had rejected the idea that he already had a *guru*. He had never received instructions from him in *bhakti*, and his family *guru* had not linked him, through disciplic succession, with Kṛṣṇa. But by taking initiation from Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī he would be linked with Kṛṣṇa. Bhaktisiddhānta, son of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and disciple of Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī, was the *guru* in the twelfth disciplic generation from Lord Caitanya. He was the foremost Vedic scholar of the age, the expert Vaiṣṇava who could guide one back to Godhead. He was empowered by his predecessors to work for the highest welfare by giving everyone Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the remedy for all sufferings. Abhay felt that he had already accepted Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta as his spiritual master and that from their very first meeting he had already received his orders. Now if Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta would accept him as his disciple, the relationship would be confirmed.

He was coming so soon after Abhay had seen and heard him in Vṛndāvana! That was how Kṛṣṇa acted, through His representative. It was as if his spiritual master, in coming to where Abhay had his family and business, was coming to draw him further into spiritual life. Without Abhay's having attempted to bring it about, his relationship with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was deepening. Now Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was coming to him, as if by a higher arrangement.

On the day of the ceremony, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī met with his disciples at the Allahabad Gaudiya Math on South Mallaca Street. While he was speaking *hari-kathā* and taking questions, Atulānanda Brahmācārī took the opportunity to present several devotees, Abhay amongst them, as candidates for initiation. The Allahabad devotees were

proud of Mr. De, who regularly attended the *maṭha* in the evening, and led *bhajan*as, listened to the teachings and spoke them himself, and often brought respectable guests. He had contributed money and had induced his business colleagues also to do so. With folded palms, Abhay looked up humbly at his spiritual master. He and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta were now face to face, and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta recognized him and was visibly pleased to see him. He already knew him. “Yes,” he said, exchanging looks with Abhay, “he likes to hear. He does not go away. I have marked him. I will accept him as my disciple.”

As the moment and the words became impressed into his being, Abhay was in ecstasy. Atulānanda was pleasantly surprised that his Gurudeva was already in approval of Mr. De. Other disciples in the room were also pleased to witness Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī’s immediate acceptance of Mr. De as a good listener. Some of them wondered when or where Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had arrived at such an estimation of the young pharmacist.

At the initiation, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was seated on a *vyāsāsana*, and the room was filled with guests and members of the Gaudiya Math. Those to be initiated sat around a small mound of earth, where one of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī’s *sannyāsis* prepared a fire and offered grains and fruits into the flames, while everyone chanted *mantras* for purification. Abhay’s sister and brother were present, but not his wife.

Abhay basked in the presence of his Gurudeva. “Yes, he likes to hear”—the words of his spiritual master and his glance of recognition had remained with Abhay. Abhay would continue pleasing his spiritual master by hearing well. “Then,” he thought, “I will be able to speak well.” The Vedic literature described nine processes of devotional service, the first of which was *śravaṇam*, hearing about Kṛṣṇa; then came *kīrtanam*, chanting about and glorifying Him. By sitting patiently and hearing at Kosi, he had pleased Kṛṣṇa’s representative, and when Kṛṣṇa’s representative was pleased, Kṛṣṇa was pleased. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had not praised him for donating money to the *maṭha* and hadn’t advised him to forsake his family and business and travel with him, nor had he asked Abhay to perform great austerities, like the *yogīs* who mortify their bodies with fasts and difficult vows. But

“He likes to hear,” he had said. “I have marked him.” Abhay thought about it and, again, listened carefully as his spiritual master conducted the initiation.

Finally, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta called for Abhay to come forward and receive the *hari-nāma* initiation by accepting his beads. After offering prostrated obeisances, Abhay extended his right hand and accepted the strand of *japa* beads from the hand of his spiritual master. At the same time, he also received the sacred brahminical thread, signifying second initiation. Usually, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta gave the first initiation, *hari-nāma*, and only after some time, when he was satisfied with the progress of the disciple, would he give the second initiation. But he offered Abhay both initiations at the same time. Now Abhay was a full-fledged disciple, a *brāhmaṇa*, who could perform sacrifices, such as this fire *yajña* for initiation; he could worship the Deity in the temple and would be expected to discourse widely. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta added *aravinda*, “lotus,” to his name; now he was Abhay Charanaravinda.

After Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī left Allahabad for Calcutta, Abhay keenly felt the responsibility of working on behalf of his spiritual master. At the initiation Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had instructed Abhay to study Rūpa Gosvāmī’s *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, which outlined the loving exchanges between Kṛṣṇa and His devotees and explained how a devotee can advance in spiritual life. *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* was a “lawbook” for devotional service, and Abhay would study it carefully. He was glad to increase his visits to the Allahabad center and to bring new people. Even at his first meeting with his spiritual master he had received the instruction to preach the mission of Lord Caitanya, and now he began steadily and carefully considering how to do so. Preaching was a responsibility at least as binding as that of home and business. Even in his home he wanted to engage as far as possible in preaching. He discussed with his wife about his plans for inviting people into their home, offering them *prasādam*, and holding discussions about Kṛṣṇa. She didn’t share his enthusiasm.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *My wife was a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, but she had some other idea. Her idea was just to worship the Deity at home and live peacefully. My idea was preaching.*

It was not possible for Abhay to travel with his spiritual master or even to see him often. His pharmaceutical business kept him busy, and he traveled frequently. Whenever possible, however, he tried to time a business trip to Calcutta when his spiritual master was also there. Thus over the next four years he managed to see his spiritual master perhaps a dozen times.

Whenever Abhay visited Calcutta, the assistant librarian at the Gaudiya Math, Nityānanda Brahmācārī, would meet him at Howrah train station with a two-horse carriage belonging to the *maṭha*. Nityānanda saw Abhay as an unusually humble and tolerant person. As they rode together to the *maṭha*, Abhay would inquire eagerly into the latest activities of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta: his traveling, his publishing, how many centers were currently open, how his disciples were doing. They wouldn't talk much about Abhay's business. Abhay would stay at the Gaudiya Math, usually for about five days. Sometimes he would visit one of his sisters who lived in Calcutta, but his main reason for coming was Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta; and Abhay would take advantage of every opportunity to hear him.

Abhay didn't try to become a leader in the inner management of the Gaudiya Math. His spiritual master had initiated eighteen *sannyāsīs*, who carried out most of the preaching and leadership of the mission. Abhay was always the householder, occupied with his own business and family, never living within the *maṭha* except for brief visits. And yet he began to develop a close relationship with his spiritual master.

Sometimes Abhay would go to see him at the Caitanya Math, at the birthplace of Lord Caitanya in Māyāpur. One day at the Caitanya Math, Abhay was in the courtyard when a large poisonous snake crawled out in front of him. Abhay called out for his Godbrothers, but when they came everyone simply stood looking, uncertain what to do. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta came out on the veranda of the second floor, glanced down, saw the snake, and immediately ordered, "Kill it." A boy then took a large stick and killed the snake.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *So I thought, "How is it that Guru Mahārāja ordered the snake to be killed?" I was a little surprised, but later on I saw this verse, and then I was very glad: modeta sādthur api vṛścika-sarpahatyā, "Even saintly persons take pleasure in the killing of a scorpion or a snake." It had remained a doubt, how Guru Mahārāja ordered the*

snake to be killed, but when I read this verse I was very much pleased that this creature or creatures like the snake should not be shown any mercy.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was reputed to be so austere and so strong in argument against other philosophies that even his own disciples were cautious in approaching him if he were sitting alone or if they had no specific business with him. Yet even though Abhay's contact with him was quite limited, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta would always treat him kindly.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *Whenever I met my Guru Mahārāja, he would always treat me very affectionately. Sometimes my Godbrothers would criticize because I would talk a little freely with him, and they would quote this English saying, "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." But I would think, "Fool? Well, maybe, but that is the way I am." My Guru Mahārāja was always very, very affectionate to me. When I offered obeisances, he used to return, "Dāso 'smi": "I am your servant."*

Sometimes as Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta paced back and forth chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra aloud while fingering his beads, Abhay would enter the room and also chant, walking alongside his spiritual master. Once when Abhay entered Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's room, his spiritual master was sitting on a couch, and Abhay took his seat beside him on an equal level. But then he noticed that all the other disciples in the room were sitting on a lower level, at their spiritual master's feet. Abhay kept his seat, and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī said nothing of it, but Abhay never again sat on an equal level with his spiritual master.

Once in a room with many disciples, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was speaking and Abhay listening when an old man beside Abhay motioned to him. As Abhay leaned over to hear what the man wanted, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta suddenly spoke out in annoyance at the two apparently inattentive students. "Bābū," he first addressed the old man beside Abhay, "do you think you have purchased me with your 150-rupees-per-month donation?" And then, turning to Abhay: "Why don't you come up here and speak instead of me?" Abhay was outwardly mortified, yet he treasured the rebuke.

It was in a private meeting that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta once told Abhay of the risks he took by preaching so boldly.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *My Guru Mahārāja's contribution is that he defeated the caste gosvāmīs. He defeated this brāhmaṇism. He did it the*

same way as Caitanya Mahāprabhu did. As Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī, śūdra kene naya/ yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei ‘guru’ haya: “There is no consideration whether one is a sannyāsī, a brāhmaṇa, a śūdra, or a gṛhastha. No. Anyone who knows the science of Kṛṣṇa, he is all right, he is gosvāmī, and he is brāhmaṇa.”

But no one else taught that since Lord Caitanya. This was my Guru Mahārāja’s contribution. And for this reason, he had to face so many vehement protests from these brāhmaṇas of the caste gosvāmīs.

Once they conspired to kill him—my Guru Mahārāja told me personally. By his grace, when we used to meet alone he used to talk about so many things. He was so kind that he used to talk with me, and he personally told me that these people, “They wanted to kill me.”

They collected twenty-five thousand rupees and went to bribe the police officer in charge of the area, saying, “You take these twenty-five thousand rupees. We shall do something against Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and you don’t take any steps.” He could understand that they wanted to kill him. So the police officer frankly came to Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī: “Of course, we accept bribes, and we indulge in such things, but not for a sādhu, not for a saintly person. I cannot dare.” So, the police officer refused and said to my Guru Mahārāja, “You take care. This is the position.” This was because he so vehemently protested.

And he liked boldness in his disciples. Abhay heard of an occasion when one of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī’s disciples had been very outspoken at a public meeting and had denounced a highly regarded Māyāvādī monk as “a foolish priest.” The remark had caused a disruption at the meeting, and some of the disciples reported the incident to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, thinking he would be displeased that his disciple had caused a disturbance. But Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was pleased and remarked, “He has done well.” His displeasure occurred, rather, when he heard of someone’s compromise.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: When my Guru Mahārāja was present, even big, big scholars were afraid to talk with even his beginning students. My Guru Mahārāja was called “living encyclopedia.” He could talk with anyone on any subject, he was so learned. And no compromise. So-called saints, avatāras, yogīs—everyone who was false was an enemy to my Guru Mahārāja. He never compromised. Some Godbrothers complained that this preaching was a “chopping technique” and it would not be

successful. But those who criticized him fell down.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was known as the *simha* ("lion") *guru*. On occasion, when he saw someone he knew to be a proponent of impersonalism, he would call that person over and challenge: "Why are you cheating the people with Māyāvādī philosophy?" He would often tell his disciples not to compromise. "Why should you go flatter?" he would say. "You should speak the plain truth, without any flattery. Money will come anyway."

Whenever Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta wrote or spoke the Vaiṣṇava philosophy, he was uncompromising; the conclusion was according to the *śāstra*, and the logic strong. But sometimes Abhay would hear his spiritual master express the eternal teachings in a unique way that Abhay knew he would never forget. "Don't try to see God," Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta would say, "but act in such a way that God sees you."

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta condemned temple proprietors who made a business of showing the Deity for a living. To be a sweeper in the street was more honorable, he said. He coined a Bengali phrase, *śālagrāma-dvārā bādāṁ bhaṅga*: "The priests are taking the *śālagrāma* Deity as a stone for cracking nuts." In other words, if a person shows the *śālagrāma* form of the Lord (or any form of the Deity) simply with a view to make money, then he is seeing the Deity not as the Lord but as a stone, a means for earning his livelihood.

Abhay had the opportunity to see his spiritual master deal with the nationalist Subhas Chandra Bose, who had been Abhay's schoolmate at Scottish Churches' College. Bose had come in a somewhat critical mood, concerned about Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's recruiting young men into religious life.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *Subhas Chandra Bose came to my Guru Mahārāja and said, "So many people you have captured. They are doing nothing for nationalism."*

My Guru Mahārāja replied, "Well, for your national propaganda you require very strong men, but these people are very weak. You can see, they are very skinny. So don't put your glance upon them. Let them eat something and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa." In this way he avoided him.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta used to say that when the day came when high court judges were devotees of Kṛṣṇa with Vaiṣṇava *tilaka* on their foreheads, then he would know that the mission of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness was becoming successful.

He said that Jesus Christ was a *śakty-āveśa avatāra*, an empowered incarnation of God. “How can it be otherwise?” he said. “He sacrificed everything for God.”

In his scholarly language he declared, “The materialistic demeanor cannot possibly stretch to the transcendental autocrat.” But sometimes in speech he phrased it in a more down-to-earth way: “The mundane scholars who are trying to understand the Supreme Lord by their senses and mental speculation are like a person trying to taste the honey in a bottle by licking the outside of the bottle.” Philosophy without religion, he said, is dry speculation; and religion without philosophy is sentiment and sometimes fanaticism.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta said that the whole world was simply a society of cheaters and cheated. He gave the example that loose women often visit certain holy places in India with the idea of seducing the *sādhus*, thinking that to have a child by a *sādhu* is prestigious. And immoral men dress themselves as *sādhus*, hoping to be seduced by the cheating women. His conclusion: a person should aspire to leave the material world and go back to Godhead, because “this material world is not a fit place for a gentleman.”

Abhay saw that when disciples asked his spiritual master about something in the future, he never replied, “Yes, it is going to happen,” or “Yes, we are going to do it.” Rather, he would say, “Yes, if Kṛṣṇa desires, it may be.” Although in his younger years he had been an astrologer and able to predict the future, he had given it up.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was a lifetime *brahmacārī* and was very strict about avoiding association with women. Once Abhay was sitting with his spiritual master when another disciple was present, along with his young wife. The wife asked Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta if she might speak with him privately, but he replied, “No, whatever it is, you can ask here. I cannot see you in private.” Abhay was impressed by this, since Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was in his sixties and the girl could have been his granddaughter; regardless, he would not speak with any woman alone.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta liked to make his disciples into *sannyāsīs*. But one day one of his *sannyāsa* disciples was forcibly dragged away by his wife. In tears, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta lamented that he was unable to save that soul. Yet he did not speak disparagingly of Kṛṣṇa conscious family life: “I would have sex hundreds of times if I thought that I could raise Kṛṣṇa conscious children.”

He would send his *brahmacārīs* out to sell the Gaudiya Math magazine and books, and even if a *brahmacārī* were able to sell only one or two, it would please him very much, and he would exclaim, “You are so nice.” In considering whether essays were worthy for publication, he would count how many times the word *Kṛṣṇa* or *Caitanya* had been used; if these holy names had been quoted sufficiently, he would say, “That’s all right. This can be used.”

He would say in Bengali, “*Prāṇ āche yār, se hetu pracār*”: “A person must have life to be a preacher—a dead man cannot preach.” When some of his preachers who had gone to chant and speak reported that no one had attended their meeting, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta replied, “That doesn’t matter. The four walls will hear you. That is sufficient. Don’t be disappointed. Go on chanting.” And in commenting on the fact that some of his disciples had fallen away: “Some of the soldiers will die,” he said.

But he did not want his disciples to lead an easygoing life—he once criticized a disciple as being “ease-loving”—nor should they attempt to practice austerities in seclusion. He would sing a song of his own composition, *Mana tumi kiser vaiṣṇava?* “My dear mind, what kind of Vaiṣṇava are you? You are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in a solitary place, imitating the great saints Haridāsa Ṭhākura and Rūpa Gosvāmī, but your meditation is actually to think of women and money. Your mind is filled with such dirty things, so your *bhajana* is simply cheating.” He taught that if a devotee gave up his preaching in the city in favor of solitary meditation, that was a method of cheating by imitating the great saints in hopes of getting cheap adoration from others. Therefore, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta never liked to open a branch of the Gaudiya Math in a place that was not very much populated.

Abhay went on listening to his spiritual master at every opportunity, but rarely did Abhay put a philosophical inquiry before him. He preferred simply to listen.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *I never asked my spiritual master a question, except one: “How shall I serve you?”*

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Abhay Charan De became prominent in the pharmaceutical business. He worked well for Bose’s Laboratory, and other companies wanted him as their agent. He had hopes of becoming rich.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *My Guru Mahārāja ordered me, "You do this." But I thought, "Let me first of all become a rich man. Then I shall do." In the beginning, I was thinking, "Now my Godbrothers have taken sannyāsa. They are begging from door to door. Why shall I beg? Let me earn money and start Kṛṣṇa consciousness."*

The biggest pharmaceutical company in India, Bengal Chemical, made him an offer, but when they did not fulfill all his conditions he turned them down—though later he regretted it. Still, there were good signs. The astrologer had predicted he could become one of India's richest men, and Dr. Kartick Bose had told his father-in-law, "He's a very intelligent man!"

But there were also other signs. As many accounts as he had secured by his wide travels, there were also that many bills to collect. Many of the accounts began to fall behind in their payments, and the accumulated debt began to grow, until he owed Bose's Laboratory a total of ten thousand rupees. And Abhay had enemies. The manager who had taken over Abhay's old position as office manager with Bose's Laboratory in Calcutta tried to turn Dr. Bose against Abhay, insinuating that he was too independent—they had heard of his negotiating with Bengal Chemical, and the new manager attributed the accumulating debt to Abhay's lack of loyalty to the home office. Kartick Bose remained favorably inclined towards Abhay, but when the debt became a financial strain he went to Allahabad to investigate. At Prayag Pharmacy he spoke with Dr. Ghosh, who told him, "He is a very honest man. It is no fault of his. In good faith he gave all these chemists drugs and credit. But he can't realize the money."

"All right," Dr. Bose said, "but I can't go on giving him money." Abhay went over the accounts with Dr. Kartick Bose, and they both agreed that the best way to settle the matter was for Dr. Bose to take over the Prayag Pharmacy and all of Abhay's accounts. Thus Abhay was absolved of debt but unemployed.

Atulānanda Brahmācārī approached him: "Why don't you come to the *maṭha*? Now you are free." Abhay began to visit more frequently the nearby Rūpa Gosvāmī Math, where the Gaudiya Math men, in their renounced *brahmācārī* spirit, suggested that he depend completely on Kṛṣṇa, give up the world, move in with them, and become a full-time preacher. But for Abhay there was no question of abandoning business. If he did, what would happen to his wife and children? He and

Radharani now had a third child, a son, so the financial responsibility was increasing. The *brahmacārīs* were well intentioned in asking him to renounce the world, and it was fine for them to do so, but Abhay couldn't take it very seriously.

Without work he was in a critical situation; but he remained confident and eager to take on new employment. There were other companies that would like to have him as their agent. And some of his old customers wanted him to service them, even if he weren't Bose's man. Abhay thought about starting his own pharmaceutical laboratory. Finally he decided he would start his own factory, but in a much bigger city than Allahabad. He settled on Bombay.

He decided that his family should remain in Allahabad and he and his brother would travel to Bombay, take an apartment, and survey the prospects for starting a factory there. Although Radharani was used to her husband's traveling, it had never been as extended as this promised to be. Abhay talked with her, explaining that his recent business loss had been the arrangement of Kṛṣṇa. Now, again to provide for his family, he would have to start a large business, and that could best be done in a major city like Bombay. But family life in Allahabad would be temporarily disrupted. He set up a very small pharmaceutical manufacturing operation there in Allahabad, put his nephew Tulasi in charge, and left for Bombay with his brother.

In Bombay, Abhay rented an apartment on Grant Road and, applying the knowledge he had gained as manager of Bose's Laboratory, started his own pharmaceutical factory. Business was going well, when a large company, Smith Institute, wanted him as their sales agent. Abhay took the job, thinking that he could earn money as Smith's representative while at the same time developing his own business. He was confident of his ability to earn money in the pharmaceutical line.

While traveling around Bombay on business, Abhay met some members of the Gaudiya Math—Bhaktirakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja and Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī, senior *sannyāsī* disciples of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Abhay recognized them as respected Godbrothers, well versed in the scriptures and Vaiṣṇava philosophy. It seemed he was destined to find his Godbrothers wherever he went. Both he and the *sannyāsīs* regarded their apparently odd meeting in the city as auspicious. Like the members of the Gaudiya Math he had met in Allahabad, these preachers had no permanent center, but they were trying to start one. On behalf of

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, they were going door to door soliciting supporters for a Bombay branch of the Gaudiya Math.

Abhay wanted to help. As a fellow Godbrother in the service of his spiritual master, he offered them his services. Although as *sannyāsīs* they were in a superior position, in their somewhat helpless condition they looked up to Abhay for help. They had been staying in a small place on Proctor Road and had found little opportunity to make important contacts. Now they formed a team, Abhay introducing the *sannyāsīs* to business acquaintances and the *sannyāsīs* taking donations for the new center. Abhay Charanaravinda was good at collecting funds, and he willingly gave his time. Again, his Godbrothers began pulling at him to participate fully in the Gaudiya Math preaching.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *We made a party for collecting alms—Śrīdhara Mahārāja, Gosvāmī Mahārāja, and myself. I took them to some of my chemist and doctor friends, and in two days we collected five hundred rupees. Śrīdhara Mahārāja would speak, I would introduce, and Gosvāmī Mahārāja would canvass. So Gosvāmī Mahārāja very much appreciated, and he began to speak highly about me: "For a bābū, he is so expert. He has got so many friends, and he has collected so much. Why should he not be in charge of our maṭha? Why shouldn't he live with us? Why is he living separately?"*

Abhay visited the *maṭha* quarters on Proctor Road, where he joined the devotees in *kīrtana* and heard them speak from the *Bhāgavatam*. At the *sannyāsīs'* request, Abhay took on the responsibility of finding a more suitable place for the Bombay center. Wherever he went in the city, he looked for likely locations. Just as he had responsibilities for his wife and family in Allahabad, by dint of his initiation he was responsibly bound to assist his Godbrothers. He had to take part in the preaching, not simply struggle so that he might exist in the world of business competition. But he didn't think he could ever live like the *sannyāsīs*—no possessions, no business, sleeping on the bare floor, taking only simple meals.

February 25, 1935

It was the sixty-second birthday of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. At Jagannātha Purī, where Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was residing, the devotees observed the day with ceremony. At the small Bombay center,

the few disciples planned an evening observance and invited local people.
For the occasion, Abhay wrote a poem.

Adore adore ye all
The happy day,
Blessed than heaven,
Sweeter than May,
When he appeared at Puri
The holy place,
My Lord and Master
His Divine Grace.

Oh! my Master
The evangelic angel,
Give us Thy light,
Light up Thy candle.
Struggle for existence
A human race.
The only hope
His Divine Grace.

Misled we are
All going astray.
Save us Lord
Our fervent pray.
Wonder Thy ways
To turn our face.
Adore Thy feet
Your Divine Grace.

Forgotten Krishna
We fallen souls,
Paying most heavy
The illusion's toll.
Darkness around
All untrace.
The only hope
His Divine Grace.

Message of service
Thou has brought.
A healthful life
As Chaitanya wrought.
Unknown to all
It's full of brace.
That's your gift
Your Divine Grace.

Absolute is sentient
Thou hast proved,
Impersonal calamity
Thou hast moved.
This gives us a life
Anew and fresh.
Worship Thy feet
Your Divine Grace.

Had you not come
Who had told
The message of Krishna
Forceful and bold.
That's your right.
You have the mace.
Save me afallen
Your Divine Grace.

The line of service
As drawn by you
Is pleasing and healthy
Like morning dew.
The oldest of all
But in new dress.
Miracle done
Your Divine Grace.

Abhay Charan das

Abhay also composed a speech, which he read before the assembled guests and members of the Gaudiya Math. Although his first language was Bengali, his English was clear and natural.

Gentlemen, the offerings of such a homage as has been arranged this evening to the Acharyadeva is not a sectarian concern, because when we speak of the fundamental principle of Gurudeva or Acharyadeva, we speak of something that is of universal application. There does not arise any question of discriminating my Guru from that of yours or anyone else's. There is only one Guru who appears in an infinity of forms to teach you, me and all others. The Guru or Acharyadeva, as we learn from the bona fide scriptures, delivers the message of the absolute world, I mean the transcendental abode of the Absolute Personality where everything non-differentially serves the Absolute Truth.

Like the poem, the speech was personal, but even more than the poem it was authoritative, philosophical *preaching*. The Godbrothers were impressed to hear Abhay presenting the Vaiṣṇava philosophy so expertly. How was it possible? Of course, it should not have come as a surprise; he had heard the Vaiṣṇava philosophy from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, just like his Godbrothers. Why should he not be able to enunciate the teachings of his spiritual master, having heard from him and having read *Gītā* and *Bhāgavatam* and *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*? Was he not a devotee in the *paramparā*? But until now, no one knew he could preach in English so expertly.

Therefore, if the Absolute Truth is one, about which we think there is no difference of opinion, the Guru also cannot be two. The Acharyadeva to whom we have assembled tonight to offer our humble homage is not the Guru of a sectarian institution or one out of many differing exponents of the truth. On the contrary, he is the Jagatguru, or the Guru of all of us, the only difference is that some obey him wholeheartedly, while others do not obey him directly.

The *guru* of whom Abhay spoke, of course, was Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, the representative of the original compiler of the scriptures, Vyāsadeva. Abhay explained how Lord Kṛṣṇa had delivered transcendental knowledge to Brahmā, the creator of this particular universe.

From Brahmā the knowledge had descended to Nārada, from Nārada to Vyāsa, from Vyāsa to Madhva . . . Because Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was presenting the Vedic knowledge as is, without any interpretation—in *paramparā*—he was the bona fide *ācārya* who could enlighten others with the revealed knowledge of the *Vedas*.

Abhay continued:

Gentlemen, our knowledge is so poor, our senses are so imperfect and our sources are so limited that it is not possible for us to have even the slightest knowledge of the absolute region without surrendering ourselves at the lotus-feet of Sree Vyasadeva or His bona fide representative.

This transcendental knowledge, Abhay explained, had been known in India for thousands of years, and this knowledge—although presently obscured—was India's real gift to the world.

We must conclude that the darkness of the present Age is not due to lack of material advancement, but that we have lost the clue to our spiritual advancement which is the prime necessity of human life and the criterion of the highest type of civilisation. Throwing of bombs from aeroplanes is no advancement of civilisation from the primitive, uncivilised way of dropping big stones on the heads of the enemies from the tops of the hills. Improvement of the art of killing our neighbours by inventing machine guns and by means of poisonous gases is certainly no advancement from primitive barbarism priding itself on its art of killing by bows and arrows, nor does the development of a sense of pampered selfishness prove anything more than intellectual animalism. . . .

Thus, while others were yet in the womb of historical oblivion, the sages of India had developed a different kind of civilisation which enables us to know ourselves. They had discovered that we are not at all material entities, but that we are all spiritual, permanent and non-destructible servants of the Absolute.

The speech continued, describing the horrible consequences of a mispent human life, the sufferings of repeated birth and death. Again and again, Abhay stressed the need to surrender to the spiritual master. He criticized empirical, mundane philosophers, godless politicians, and blind sense gratifiers. He repeatedly pointed to the soul's natural and sublime position as the servant of God and as the servant of the pure devotee of

God. Abhay, an initiated disciple of his spiritual master for a little more than two years, referring to himself as a student, continued:

Gentlemen, although we are like ignorant children in the knowledge of the transcendence, still His Divine Grace, my Gurudeva, has kindled a small fire within us to dissipate the invincible darkness of the empirical knowledge, and we are so much so on the safe side that no amount of philosophical argument of the empiric schools of thought can deviate us an inch from the position of our eternal dependence on the lotus-feet of His Divine Grace—and we are prepared to challenge the most erudite scholars of the Mayavada school on this vital issue: that the Personality of Godhead and His transcendental sports in Goloka alone constitute the sublime information of the Vedas.

He then ended his speech with an eloquent prayer of submission.

Personally I have no hope to have any direct service for the coming crores of births of the sojourn of my life, but I am confident that some day or other I shall be delivered from this mire of delusion in which I am at present so deeply sunk. Therefore, let me with all my earnestness pray at the lotus-feet of my Divine Master to let me suffer the lot which I am destined to do for all my past misdoings, but to let me have this power of recollection that I am nothing but a tiny servant of the Almighty Absolute Godhead, realised through the unflinching mercy of my Divine Master. Let me, therefore, bow down at his lotus-feet with all the humility at my command.

He submitted both the poem and speech to *The Harmonist*. The poem, Abhay's first publication, announced him as a competent writer in English, and Swami Bhaktipradīpa Tīrtha, editor of *The Harmonist*, informally dubbed Abhay as *kavi*, "learned poet." Some of Abhay's Godbrothers also picked up on the name and began calling him *kavi*. Most of them, even the *sannyāsīs*, were not so proficient in English. But Abhay was not ordinary. They could appreciate that the poem was personal, written out of Abhay's genuine worship and his joy at having accepted a genuine spiritual master, but it was also written strictly in accord with the conclusions of the scriptures.

For Abhay, however, the glory of his "Sree Vyas Puja Homage" came when the poem reached Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and it gave him

pleasure. One stanza specifically made Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta so happy that he made a point of showing it to all of his guests.

Absolute is sentient
Thou hast proved,
Impersonal calamity
Thou hast moved.

Somehow, in this simple couplet Abhay had captured the essence of his spiritual master's preaching against the Māyāvādīs, and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta took it as an indication of how well Abhay knew the mind of his Gurudeva. Abhay was delighted when he heard that the couplet was pleasing to his spiritual master. One of Abhay's Godbrothers compared this verse by Abhay to a verse in which Rūpa Gosvāmī had expressed the inner thinking of Caitanya Mahāprabhu and had thus moved Him to ecstasy.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī also found the essay pleasing, and he showed it to some of his confidential devotees. He instructed the editor of *The Harmonist*, "Whatever he writes, publish it."

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Abhay thought it only natural that he should have many business enemies or competitors—it was a sign of success. But his Bombay competition caused him to lose another good chance to become wealthy. The "enemy" was the son of Abhay's supervisor at Smith Institute. Both son and father complained to the Smith Institute executives that Abhay Charan De was pushing goods from his own laboratory and not Smith's. By this intrigue, Abhay lost his position with Smith Institute, and his supervisor placed his own son as the new agent. Abhay was again on his own.

While continuing to help his *sannyāsī* Godbrothers in Bombay, he found a two-story building for rent at Gawlia Tank Road. Everyone agreed it would make a suitable center, and Abhay arranged for the rental and for initial repairs and helped the *sannyāsīs* move in. It seemed that his endeavors for spiritual things were always successful, whereas his business efforts were consistently failing. Of course, a few business

enemies were no cause for discouragement—intrigues and losses were always part of the game, and he was still well known in the pharmaceutical business throughout India. But it wasn't so much the give and take of business that disturbed him as his own doubts about whether this was the best way for him to serve his spiritual master. Business was good only if it could go side by side with his spiritual life. Lord Caitanya had said that the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa should be spread to every town and village, and Abhay wanted to assist his spiritual master in fulfilling that prophecy, especially by contributing money and helping establish centers. His earnings should not go solely for his family.

Ideally, family life and spiritual life should progress side by side. But the difficulty was Abhay's wife. She was disturbed over the business losses and apathetic to the spiritual successes. She wanted to stay within the orbit of home and family, and despite Abhay's suggestions she refused to accept initiation from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta. It was his own wife who was his most formidable competitor. And she waged her opposition right in the home, where it was least welcome.

When Abhay occasionally visited his family in Allahabad, he tried to satisfy them with his good intentions. Business had not gone so well in Bombay, but he had new plans, and he assured his family that there was no need to worry. He planned to do more preaching in his home—the whole family could become more involved in spiritual activities. He wanted to invite guests, hold discussions on *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, perform *kīrtana*, distribute *prasādam*. He wanted to preach, just as his spiritual master and Godbrothers were preaching. Such a program wouldn't require that a *sannyāsī* or *brahmacārī* come and preside. Abhay could do it himself. This would be an example of the ideal household life. But Radharani was unsubmitive. Rather than coming to hear him speak, she stayed with the children in another room—taking tea.

In Bombay, Abhay associated with Śrīdhara Mahārāja and Bhakti-sāraṅga Gosvāmī. Both *sannyāsīs* were highly literate scholars. Śrīdhara Mahārāja was respected for his erudition in the *śāstras*, and Bhakti-sāraṅga Gosvāmī for his writing and preaching in English. Sometimes Abhay would discuss his realizations with them.

Abhay also studied the scriptures on his own—his spiritual master's commentary on the *Gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as well as commentaries by the previous *ācāryas*. While reading Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's commentary on *Bhagavad-gītā* (Second Chapter, forty-first verse), he read that the disciple should consider the order of the spiritual master to be his life and soul. These words produced a deep effect on Abhay, strengthening his desire to execute Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's command. And in the Eighty-eighth Chapter of the Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, he came upon a verse in which Lord Kṛṣṇa said something that startled him:

*yasyāham anugṛhṇāmi
hariṣye tad-dhanam śanaiḥ
tato 'dhanam tyajanty asya
sva-janā duḥkha-duḥkhitam*

“When I feel especially mercifully disposed towards someone, I gradually take away all his material possessions. His friends and relatives then reject this poverty-stricken and most wretched fellow.” Abhay shuddered as he read the verse. It seemed to speak directly to him. But what did it mean? “Does it mean,” he thought, “that Kṛṣṇa will take away all my money?” Was that what was actually happening? Was that why his business plans were failing? He discussed the meaning of the verse with Śrīdhara Mahārāja. Yes, Śrīdhara Mahārāja confirmed, this might very well be what was happening between Lord Kṛṣṇa and Abhay.

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In July 1935, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī came to install the Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa and to institute Deity worship at the Bombay center. He was pleased with what his disciples had done so far, and Bhaktisāraṅga Mahārāja admitted that much of the work was due to Abhay Bābū, who had collected funds and established the new center. “Why is Abhay living separately?” Bhaktisāraṅga asked. “He should be president of this Bombay center.”

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī replied, “It is better that he is living outside your company. He will do. When the time comes, he will do everything

himself. You don't have to recommend him.”

Abhay had not been present when this was spoken, but his Godbrothers told him what Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had said. These words of his spiritual master, with their mysteriously prophetic air, were important to Abhay. He treasured the words within himself and meditated upon their meaning.

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In November 1935 he was again with his spiritual master in Vṛndāvana. It was the Kārttika season, the ideal time to visit Vṛndāvana, and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was staying for a month with his disciples at peaceful Rādhā-kuṇḍa, the sacred lake where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa used to sport.

After leaving Bombay in July, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had gone to Calcutta, where he had spoken on radio, delivered many public lectures, welcomed back the preachers he had sent to Europe, and finished publishing his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* translation and commentary. Then in October he had come to Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Occupying the small one-story house Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had constructed, he had been reading and speaking to the assembled devotees on the *Upaniṣads*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. He had also installed Deities at Śrī Kuṅjavihārī Math.

The banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa were overhung with bright green foliage growing from the gnarled branches of ancient tamarind, *tamāla*, and *nim* trees. In the shallows of the water, cranes stood on stiltlike legs, while river terns skimmed across the lake, sometimes abruptly diving for fish. Sometimes a tortoise would poke its nose up from the water's depth, or a fish would jump. Green parrots, usually in pairs, flew in and out of the green trees, and sparrows chirped and hopped from place to place. Peacocks were also there, mostly in nearby gardens, as were occasional rabbits and even deer.

The atmosphere was enriched with the history of *kṛṣṇa-līlā*. Five thousand years ago, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa had engaged in transcendental pastimes here, and only five hundred years ago Lord Caitanya had rediscovered Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Lord Caitanya's great follower Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī had resided here for many years, constantly chanting Hare

Kṛṣṇa and discussing the activities of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. And here, in a small *bhajana-kuṭīr*, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja had written *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, the narrative of the pastimes of Lord Caitanya that Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī relished so much. Many of the inhabitants at Rādhā-kuṇḍa were *bābājīs*, living in small *bhajana-kuṭīrs* and spending their time chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Having heard of his spiritual master's stay here, Abhay, bringing his son with him, had traveled from Bombay, just to have *darśana* of his spiritual master. To see Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was always an occasion for jubilation, but to see him in Vṛndāvana was an added perfection. This meeting with his beloved guide and friend was different from the time in 1932 when Abhay had seen him on the Vṛndāvana *parikrama*. Now Abhay was no longer sitting anonymously in the back of a room. Now he was a bona fide disciple, recognized as the "kavi" who had written the praiseworthy poem and essay, the young man who listened well, the devotee who had helped the Allahabad *maṭha* and who had established the *maṭha* in Bombay. Already on this visit Abhay had had occasion to be alone with his spiritual master, who had remembered Abhay's son and presented him with a small *bandhī* (jacket). And now, as they walked together alone on the bank of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta turned and spoke confidentially to Abhay.

There had been some quarreling amongst his leading disciples in Calcutta, he said, and this distressed him very much. Even now, in Vṛndāvana, it weighed heavily on his mind. Some of his disciples had been fighting over who would use various rooms and facilities at the Gaudiya Math headquarters in Calcutta. These devotees were all members of the same *maṭha*, and the building was for propagating Kṛṣṇa consciousness under the leadership of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Yet even in their spiritual master's presence they were quarreling. *Brāhmaṇas* and *Vaiṣṇavas* were supposed to be free from envy of any creature, what to speak of envy of one another. If they were to fight now, what would they do after their spiritual master passed away? Abhay had no part in these matters and did not even know the details or who was involved. But as he listened to his spiritual master, he also became distressed.

Deeply concerned, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta said to Abhay, "*Āgūn jvalbe*": "There will be fire"—one day there would be fire in the

Calcutta Gaudiya Math, and that fire of party interests would spread and destroy. Abhay heard but did not know what to make of it. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had fought so long and boldly to establish that anyone of any birth could be elevated to become a *brāhmaṇa*, a *sannyāsi*, or a *Vaiṣṇava*. But if his followers became contaminated by a little wealth and the desire for prestige, thereby showing themselves to be still low-class men despite their training and purification, then his mission would be disrupted. If in the name of religion they became attached to ease, position, and prestige, it could only mean that they had failed to grasp the teachings of their spiritual master.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *He was lamenting that these men are simply after the stones and bricks of the building. He condemned. He was very, very sorry.*

“When we were living in a rented house,” Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta said, “if we could collect two hundred or three hundred rupees we were living very nicely at Ultadanga. We were happier then. But since we have been given this marble palace in Baghbazar, there is friction between our men. Who will occupy this room? Who will occupy that room? Who will be the proprietor of this room? Everyone is planning in different ways. It would be better to take the marble from the walls and secure money. If I could do this and print books, that would be better.”

Abhay felt his spiritual master speaking to him in urgency, as if asking him for help or warning him to avert a disaster. But what could he do?

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta then said directly to Abhay, “*Āmār icchā chila kichu bai karānā*”: “I had a desire to print some books. If you ever get money, *print books*.” Standing by Rādhā-kuṇḍa and beholding his spiritual master, Abhay felt the words deeply enter his own life—“If you ever get money, *print books*.”

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December 1936

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta was in poor health at Jagannātha Purī. Abhay was in Bombay, and he wanted to write his Guru Mahārāja a letter. “He

is a little kind upon me," Abhay thought. "He will understand my request." And he began to write:

Dear Guru Maharaja,

Please accept my humble obeisances at your lotus feet. You have got many disciples, and I am one of them, but they are doing direct service to you. Some of them are brahmacharies, some of them are sannyasis, but I am a householder. I cannot. Sometimes I give monetary help, while I cannot give you direct service. Is there any particular service I can do?

Two weeks later, Abhay received a reply.

I am fully confident that you can explain in English our thoughts and arguments to the people who are not conversant with the languages of the other members.

This will do much good to yourself as well as your audience.

I have every hope that you can turn yourself into a very good English preacher if you serve the mission to inculcate the novel impression of Lord Chaitanya's teachings in the people in general as well as philosophers and religionists.

Abhay at once recognized this to be the same instruction he had received at their first meeting, in 1922. He took it as a confirmation. There was now no doubt as to the purpose of his life. What his spiritual master had said in Calcutta in 1922 had not been a chance remark, nor had that been a chance meeting. The instruction was the same: "Turn yourself into a very good English preacher. This will do much good to yourself as well as your audience."

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Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta passed away from the mortal world on January 1, 1937. He had been spending his last days reading *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and chanting on his beads. When a doctor had visited him, wanting to give him an injection, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had protested, "Why are you disturbing me in this way? Simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, that's all." Amongst his last words to his disciples were,

I advise all to preach the teachings of Rūpa-Ṛāghunātha [disciples of Lord Caitanya] with all energy and resources. Our ultimate goal shall be to become the dust of the lotus feet of Śrī Śrī Rūpa and Rāghunātha Gosvāmīs. You should all work conjointly under the guidance of your spiritual master with a view to serve the Absolute Knowledge, the Personality of Godhead. You should live somehow or other without any quarrel in this mortal world only for the service of Godhead. Do not, please, give up the service of Godhead, in spite of all dangers, all criticisms, and all discomforts. Do not be disappointed, for most people in the world do not serve the Personality of Godhead; do not give up your own service, which is your everything and all, neither reject the process of chanting and hearing of the transcendental holy name of Godhead. You should always chant the transcendental name of Godhead with patience and forbearance like a tree and humbleness like a straw. . . . There are many amongst you who are well qualified and able workers. We have no other desire whatsoever.

In his last days he had remained fully conscious and had given instructions until the end. He had specifically and openly ordered that the affairs of his Gaudiya Math be maintained by a twelve-man governing body, which the devotees should select amongst themselves. Finally he had said, "Please accept my blessings to you all, present and absent. Please bear in mind that our sole duty and religion is to spread and propagate service to the Lord and of His devotees." At 5:30 A.M. on January 1 he breathed his last.

Word very soon reached Abhay in Bombay. His immediate response was to cry with grief—no more the joy of an anticipated meeting, no more trips to Calcutta or Vṛndāvana on the plea of business just to see the tall, commanding form of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, the "evangelic angel." This sense of never meeting again was difficult to bear. Philosophically, Abhay knew that there was no reason to lament. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had come into the world to execute the mission of Lord Caitanya, and now it was required that he leave this place and go to another, where he would again engage in the same activity. Yet even armed with this philosophy, Abhay felt all alone. His two great well-wishers were gone—his father and now his spiritual master. But he felt grateful that he had received a special mercy, a final instruction, just two weeks before his spiritual master's departure. Abhay read his letter

again and again—there would not be another. The intimate talks and meetings were now gone, but by this letter especially, Abhay would live in the instructions of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. The letter had come just in time. Now he knew for certain, no matter what anyone else said, how to please his spiritual master and stay linked with Kṛṣṇa. Following his order, he would conquer the feeling of loss at the disappearance of his most affectionate well-wisher.

CHAPTER FIVE

The War

Under the circumstances since 1936 up to now, I was simply speculating whether I shall venture this difficult task and that without any means and capacity; but as none have discouraged me, I have now taken courage to take up the work.

—Śrīla Prabhupāda,
Back to Godhead magazine

The “fire in the *maṭha*” broke out almost immediately. A senior disciple said that there should be one *ācārya* who would be the spiritual successor to Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and who would perform all initiations and settle all controversies. But Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had never said that. He had never called for one *ācārya*. Rather, he had instructed the members of the Gaudiya Math to form a governing body of twelve men and carry on a concerted effort. But that instruction was abandoned, and the suggestion that there be one leader took hold. A single person, instead of twelve, should take charge, and now it became a rush for *who*.

Two parties contested. Ananta Vāsudeva, one of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta’s leading preachers, was ambitious, and he pressed his claim with a group of influential *sannyāsī* supporters. Another man, Kuṅjavihārī, shrewdly went after the properties. He had been a leading administrator under Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, and now he claimed

ownership of the palatial temple in Calcutta as well as all the other properties and assets of the India-wide Gaudiya Math. Although in his will Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had expressed his desire that his disciples select a governing board to manage all properties and funds of the Gaudiya Math, Kuṅjavihārī contested the will's legitimacy. He and his supporters argued that since Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had received the properties on behalf of God, he was not their rightful owner and therefore could not determine their future ownership. Thus he and the others disputed over the legal and theological aspects of the former *ācārya*'s position.

Shortly after Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's passing away, litigation had begun. Ananta Vāsudeva, supported by a majority of the members of the Gaudiya Math, had claimed that he, as the next *ācārya*, was the owner and director of the properties. But although Kuṅjavihārī had only a few supporters, he defied the majority by pressing his claim through lawyers in court. Kuṅjavihārī and his men had possession of the Caitanya Math and the temples in Māyāpur. Vāsudeva's party captured other buildings. Quarreling and fistfights broke out. The preaching of the Gaudiya Math stopped.

Abhay's inability to take part in the activities of the Gaudiya Math was suddenly in his favor. He had always been more a visitor than a member at the *maṭha* and, at least externally, more the *gr̥hastha* businessman than a missionary worker. This automatically put him at a distance from the fray. Of course, he was associated with the *maṭhas* in Bombay and Allahabad, but he had no managerial position, no claims to ownership, and no role in the litigation. Nor did he desire to take sides in the struggle for power. Like many of the other disciples, he was mortified to see that his spiritual master's instructions for cooperation had been disregarded and his mission thrown into a legal dispute. Abhay knew that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had wanted the leaders to work cooperatively, and so he could not sympathize with the warring factions. Both parties were an insult to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

But he wanted to preach. Although becoming "a very good English preacher" was something he was meditating on more than actively doing, the Gaudiya Math would logically have been the vehicle for his preaching. He had already contributed articles to the Gaudiya Math's publications and had been working with his Godbrothers at the Allahabad and

Bombay centers. Naturally he thought of serving his spiritual master in terms of serving within his spiritual master's mission. But the Gaudiya Math, which had always been known for pure, bold preaching of the message of Lord Caitanya, was now becoming known for embroiled factions. As the Gaudiya Math broke down, he was also affected. Under the present circumstances, how could he carry out his spiritual master's order to preach? Previously the main obstacle to his preaching had been family commitments, but now the obstacles were compounded. Now he had to wait helplessly for the outcome of this struggle. What would Kṛṣṇa bring about?

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1938

His Bombay business diminishing, Abhay, now forty-two, moved back to Calcutta with his wife and family and rented a house at 6 Sita Kanta Banerjee Lane. The street was but a narrow lane, lined on either side with three-story houses. His office was on the first floor, facing the street; the family lived upstairs. He rented the adjoining building, number seven, and on the first floor operated a small chemical laboratory manufacturing distilled water, De's Pain Liniment, Vimal Tonic, Alpa (an injection for boils), and various other medicines. He also utilized a small outbuilding in the rear as part of his lab. Out front he hung a large signboard—Abhay Charan De and Sons—displaying a picture of a mustached Abhay Charan.

Sometimes he would employ two or three servants to assist him, but mostly he worked alone. And he would deliver his glass jugs of distilled water to agents, such as Bengal Company and Gluconet. He printed a brochure advertising De's Pain Liniment: "Good for relieving gout, rheumatism, and all pains." And if one wanted to be free of recurring diseases like rheumatism and gout, Abhay's brochure directed that in addition to using De's Pain Liniment one refrain from "alcohol and all sorts of drinking or intoxicating habits, and food and drink should be very simple and innocent such as vegetables and milk."

The new Calcutta business enjoyed an early success, but Abhay didn't

have his heart in it. It was a duty—he had to do it to maintain his family. His new acquaintances in Calcutta found him to be a devotee of God at heart—a businessman, a family man, but more concerned with writing and preaching than with business and family.

Chandi Mukerjee (a neighbor from nearby Bihari Street): *He was interested only in devotional activities, and he did his business only to maintain the family. He didn't seem interested in the profit motive, in accumulating money or becoming a rich man.*

Charan Mukerjee (Abhay's next-door neighbor): *Abhay Charan De was always a very patient listener to every illogical argument that anybody, including myself, would bring to him. Not knowing philosophy, I would illogically present so many arguments, and Mr. De would always very patiently listen. Nothing agitated him. He was always very calm, and he taught me about God. He would speak only of Kṛṣṇa. He was translating the Gītā and was maintaining his business.*

Neighbors would often see him sitting on his cot in the front room. He would read his spiritual master's books and sometimes recite the Sanskrit śloka out loud. He liked to discuss philosophy with anyone who came by. His family keeping mostly upstairs, Abhay would sit alone in the downstairs front room, dressed in dhotī and kurtā, or sometimes a dhotī and only a vest. Often he would be at his writing, while outside the door his children played with the children of the Ganguli family, who lived in the rear apartment of the same building.

The neighbors lived openly in a kind of joint neighborhood family, and Abhay talked freely with the other neighbors—but of Vaiṣṇava philosophy and only rarely of business. Mr. Ganguli found Abhay's speech "scholastic and always very philosophical." Abhay was absorbed in the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and even in brief conversations he would refer to Lord Kṛṣṇa and to *Bhagavad-gītā's* description of Lord Kṛṣṇa as the basis of both the material and spiritual worlds. While working in his laboratory, or receiving a delivery of empty bottles from the Muslim bottle merchant, or going out to sell his medicine, he would be talking or thinking about God.

In those days, for a person in Calcutta to be interested in God consciousness was not so unusual. Abhay found even a man like Abdullah, the Muslim bottle merchant, to be very religious. One day Abhay asked Abdullah, who had once been very poor but had become rich by his busi-

ness, "Now you've got money. So how are you going to use your money?" The bottle merchant replied, "My dear sir, I have an intention to construct a mosque."

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Meanwhile, the war of the Gaudiya Math raged on. Both factions were ill-motivated, and both deviated from the instructions of their spiritual master. The very act of trying to determine ownership of the properties through legal action meant that the Godbrothers were disobeying the express desire of their spiritual master, as stated in his will. The litigation continued year after year, but the legal wrangling could not bring them together or purify them. One court ruled in favor of Ananta Vāsudeva, but then a higher court awarded two thirds of the *maṭha*'s properties to Kuṅjavihārī and one third to Vāsudeva. Still, although Vāsudeva had fewer properties, he inspired more followers—he seemed to them more intent on reviving the preaching of the Gaudiya Math. But when Vāsudeva subsequently fell down from the principles of *sannyāsa* by going off with a woman, the groups broke further to pieces.

Most of the *sannyāsīs* continued to maintain their principles, but many now left the jurisdiction of the two contending factions in disgust. Individuals formed their own *āśramas*: Gaudiya Mission, Caitanya Gaudiya Math, and others. The unified entity of Gaudiya Math as an all-India mission consisting of many temples, several presses, and hundreds of devotees working cooperatively under one leadership ceased to exist. Godbrothers continued to uphold the teachings of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu as they had received them from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, but because they were meant to work together, they lacked their former united potency. Illusions of proprietorship and prestige had superseded the spiritual master's order, and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's cause—a world-wide movement for propagating Lord Caitanya's teachings—collapsed.

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Wherever Abhay went he seemed to attract the company of his Godbrothers. Some followers of Śrīdhara Mahārāja—the same Śrīdhara with whom he had worked in Bombay and whom he had always regarded as a good devotee and scholar—met Abhay at his place on Banerjee Lane

and told this news to Śrīdhara Mahārāja, who was then living at his own *āśrama* in Māyāpur. Śrīdhara Mahārāja had disaffiliated himself from the factions of the Gaudiya Math, but as a *sannyāsī* he was still preaching and was interested in publishing Vaiṣṇava literature. He had wanted to maintain an *āśrama* in Calcutta, so for twenty rupees a month he rented from Abhay the four rooms on the second floor of number seven, above Abhay's chemical laboratory.

Now, whenever they came to Calcutta, Śrīdhara Mahārāja, Purī Mahārāja, and Bhaktisāraṅga Mahārāja based themselves here, staying in small separate rooms. It became a regular *āśrama* for *sannyāsīs* and *brahmacārīs*, and Śrīdhara Mahārāja put a sign out front: Devānanda Sarasvatī Math.

Śrīdhara Mahārāja's establishment of a *maṭha* in Māyāpur with a branch in Calcutta was his response to the Gaudiya Math's split. Like other *sannyāsīs*, he had been initiating disciples and preaching, not waiting for the outcome of the litigation, with its continued appeals and counterclaims. Abhay was glad to encourage Śrīdhara Mahārāja and the others who joined him at his little *āśrama*. Here Abhay and Śrīdhara Mahārāja and his followers could remain aloof from the warring factions and together pursue their plans for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The *sannyāsīs* cooked in their separate kitchen, performed their *pūjā*, and held morning and evening *kīrtanas* and lectures. Abhay remained with his family, taking his own meals and performing his own *pūjā*, but he often went to discuss *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* with Śrīdhara Mahārāja. From his roof, Abhay could see the towering steeple of his spiritual master's building, the Gaudiya Math of Baghbazār, its ownership now contested by bitter factions.

Abhay would often accompany Śrīdhara Mahārāja and his assistants at preaching programs, where he would play the *mṛdaṅga*. And when Śrīdhara Mahārāja fell ill, Abhay led the other devotees on preaching engagements, performing *kīrtana*, playing *mṛdaṅga*, and giving lectures on the *Bhāgavatam*.

Śrīdhara Mahārāja: *We did not see Abhay as working very hard for making money, nor did he seem very rich or to have a lot of liquid funds. He was attracted more to the spiritual side of affairs than to his family affairs. He never discussed business prospects with me—whether the busi-*

ness was up or down, or whether he was planning to do this or that. Monetarily, he did not have sufficient funds for giving any to the mission.

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Abhay began to think seriously about writing Vaiṣṇava literature. His spiritual master had seemed very pleased and had told the editor of *The Harmonist*, "Whatever he writes, publish it." Business profits, if he could somehow expand them, could go for printing books in English, as his spiritual master had said. "If you ever get money, print books." Certainly the Gaudiya Math was not going to do it; Kuṇjavihārī had sold Bhaktisiddhānta's printing presses to offset his legal expenses. No, Abhay would have to continue on his own, maintaining his business and simultaneously trying to write and publish. And that was also the prescription of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta: "It is better that he is living outside your company. When the time comes, he will do everything himself."

It was in 1939 that Abhay wrote "Introduction to Geetopaniṣad." It was a short piece, but it signaled his intention to take on the task of one day translating *Bhagavad-gītā* into English with commentary. Of course, there were already many commentaries in English, but most of them had been written by impersonalists or others who had not delivered the original spirit of the *Gītā*, the spirit of Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra hearing *Bhagavad-gītā* directly from Lord Kṛṣṇa. Abhay knew, however, that he could present *Bhagavad-gītā* in the proper spirit by writing an English commentary based on the teachings of Lord Caitanya and the disciplic succession. So he began. Whenever he could make time, he would write. Although a strict grammarian could find fault in his English composition, his meaning was always clear.

In his "Introduction," Abhay reflected on the time when as a young schoolboy he had attended a lecture, "Vidyā-ratna—The Jewel of Education." The theme of the lecture had been that God does not exist and could not exist. If there were God, He would certainly have appeared on earth to put an end to all religious rivalry; but since God had not obliged

man in this way, we should banish all thought of His existence from our minds. The audience, Abhay explained, consisting only of so many young boys, did not delve deeply into the subject matter of the lecture, yet the majority, impressed by the arguments, “carried away lofty ideas of godlessness, and thus became agnostics at home.”

Abhay had not been satisfied with the agnostic conclusion, “because I had been trained by my father to be engaged in the worship of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda. But as a result of the Vidyā-ratna lecture, I was experiencing some mental conflict between agnosticism and the existence of Godhead.” Later, having heard from his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhakti-siddhānta, Abhay understood that the Personality of Godhead exists in every sphere of activity. “But we do not have the eyes to see Him,” Abhay wrote. “Even if the Lord personally manifests Himself on earth, the quarrelling mundaners will not stop their fighting and look upon Godhead or His representative, due to ignorance. This is the birthright of the individual soul by the grace of God.”

Bhagavad-gītā is the true “jewel of education.” And in the *Gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa “declares to the fighting people on earth, ‘Here I am. Do not quarrel.’” The agnostic who had spoken of the “jewel of education” had been blinded by the jewel and therefore could not see and appreciate the Personality of Godhead. Thus he had gone on to convince others to become so-called jewels also.

Following his spiritual master, Abhay displayed an aggressive spirit for confronting all opponents of pure theism. In responding to his spiritual master’s order to develop into an English preacher, Abhay was not simply making neutral scholarly presentations; he was willing and ready to fight—whether against modern agnostics or Vaiṣṇavism’s old, traditional enemy, Māyāvāda impersonalism.

Although few scholars taught the way of surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa, as espoused in *Bhagavad-gītā*, almost all respected *Bhagavad-gītā* as presenting the essence of all knowledge. The *Gītā*, therefore, was the perfect vehicle for confronting those who misrepresented God and religion. The *Gītā* was a “challenge to the agnostics, apotheosists, anthropomorphists, impersonalists, henotheists, pantheists, and absolute monists.” Although there were already more than six hundred commentaries on *Bhagavad-gītā*, they had been written by persons with “an inner hatred for the Personality of Godhead,” and therefore they were imperfect. “Such envious persons,” Abhay wrote, “have no entrance into the real meaning of

Bhagwat Geeta inasmuch as a fly cannot enter into the covered jar of honey."

Abhay described Indian culture as an almost impassable ocean, due to its depth of thought and apparent mixtures of conclusions. "But in this book," Abhay declared, "I will establish that Krishna is the Absolute Personality of Godhead by referring to the available records of scriptures which are the recorded history of Indian culture and thought."

The *sannyāsīs* at 7 Banerjee Lane were impressed by the scope of Abhay's thought and intentions. As it was customary to award a title to an especially worthy Vaiṣṇava according to his qualities, Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī wanted to confer upon Abhay the title Bhaktisiddhānta. Śrīdhara Mahārāja, however, thought it inappropriate to give Abhay the same title as their spiritual master, and he asked that Abhay's title be changed to Bhaktivedānta, *bhakti* meaning "devotion" and *vedānta* meaning "the end of knowledge." Abhay was grateful. The title combined the devotion of religion with the scholarship of the most rigorous philosophy, as passed down by the scholarly followers of Lord Caitanya. He appreciated the sincere gesture of his Godbrothers and accepted the title as a further commitment to his spiritual path of preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Abhay continued regularly associating with Śrīdhara Mahārāja and discussing with him *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Abhay encouraged him to preach widely, although Śrīdhara Mahārāja was admittedly more the scholar and rather shy about going out and preaching. On several occasions, Abhay tried to convince Śrīdhara Mahārāja to go with him and charge Gandhi and Nehru as to why they weren't following the principles of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Another fruit of the spiritual association at 7 Banerjee Lane was a book called *Prapanna-jīvanāmṛta*, compiled by Śrīdhara Mahārāja. A collection of verses from various Vaiṣṇava scriptures, including excerpts from the works of Rūpa Gosvāmī, it was divided into six chapters, according to the six divisions of surrender. Abhay, along with the *sannyāsīs* of the Devānanda Sarasvatī Math, financed the publication. Thus it was published as a joint effort by friends.

September 3, 1939

Lord Linlithgow, viceroy of India, announced that India was at war with Germany. Thus England swept India into the war — without consulting any Indians. Although independence-minded India certainly resented such a show of foreign control, there were mixed feelings about the war. India wanted independence, yet she sympathized with the allied cause against fascism in the West and feared an invasion by imperial Japan in the East. "Since you dislike the British so violently," one author asked a typical New Delhi student of the day, "would you want Japan to invade and conquer India?" Student: "No, but we Indians pray that God may give the British enough strength to stand up under the blows they deserve."

Although at the outbreak of the war India had only 175,000 men in her armed forces, the British managed to increase the number of Indian soldiers to two million. There was no draft, but the British sent recruiting agents all over India, especially in the Punjab, where military service seemed an attractive offer to the local poor. The Punjabis proved good fighters, whereas Bengalis enlisted as officers, doctors, contractors, and clerks. Indian soldiers were dispatched to battlefields in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Persia, Malaya, Burma, and Assam.

While the British were attempting to mobilize Indians for the war, the Indian nationalist movement, which had continued off and on for more than twenty years, became very active. Members of the Congress Party refused to cooperate with the war effort and demanded guaranteed independence for India. Some thought that since England had her hands full with Germany, the time was ripe to revolt and gain independence by force. Gandhi's position had been one of unconditional pacifism, and he had opposed the idea of Indians taking up arms, even to defend India. But by 1942 he had become more inimical and had reduced his policy towards the British to a simple, unequivocal "Quit India!" Thousands of Indians responded by chanting slogans in the street and even by tearing up the railway lines.

Abhay's militant former schoolmate Subhas Chandra Bose fought against the British in his own way. He had approached Hitler in Germany and gotten him to agree that when the Germans captured Indian soldiers, Germany would return them to Bose, who would maintain them in his nationalist Army. With this army Bose planned to return to India and

drive the British from Indian soil. But dissatisfied with his progress in Germany, Bose made a similar agreement with Tojo in Japan, and soon thousands of Gurkhas and Sikhs (the best fighters in the Indian army) had defected from the British army to join Bose's freedom fighters in Singapore. Bose began to prepare his army to invade India from the north.

Then in 1943 the British found that the Japanese, who had already taken Burma, were at the doors of India, approaching Bengal. By their tactic known as the "denial policy," the British sank many Indian boats carrying food and destroyed large rice crops, fearing that they would fall into the hands of the enemy. This left local Indians starving and without the boats they needed for trade. The famine that ensued was the worst that had hit Bengal in 150 years. The government removed all control of food costs, and those who could not afford to buy at the skyrocketing prices died in the streets of Calcutta.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *I have got experience—the government created artificial famine. The war was going on, so Mr. Churchill's policy was to keep the people in scarcity so they will volunteer to become soldiers. So this policy was executed. Big men, they collected the rice. Rice was selling at six rupees per mound. All of a sudden it came to fifty rupees per mound. I was in the grocer shop purchasing, and all of a sudden the grocer said, "No, no. I am not going to sell any more!" At that moment the price was six rupees per mound. So suddenly he was not going to sell. A few hours later, I went back to purchase, and the rice had gone up to fifty rupees per mound.*

The government-appointed agents began to purchase the rice and other commodities which are daily necessities. They can offer any price, because the currency is in their hands. They can print so-called papers, a hundred dollars, and pay. A man becomes satisfied, thinking, "Oh, I have a hundred dollars." But it is a piece of paper. . . .

That was the policy. "You have no money, no rice? So another avenue is open—yes, you become a soldier. You get so much money." People, out of poverty, would go there. I have seen it. No rice was available in the market. And people were hungry. They were dying.

Abhay managed to purchase just enough for his own family to survive. But he saw the beggar population increase by the hundreds. Month after month he saw the footpaths and open spaces congested with beggars,

cooking their food on improvised stoves and sleeping in the open or beneath the trees. He saw starving children rummaging in the dustbins for a morsel of food. From there it was but a step to fighting with the dogs for a share of the garbage, and this also became a familiar sight in the Calcutta streets. The British had little time to spare from their war efforts, and they worked only to save those lives essential for the fight. For the common people the empire's prescription was uniform and simple—starvation.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *One American gentleman was present at that time. He remarked, "People are starving in this way. In our country there would have been revolution." Yes, but the people of India are so trained that in spite of artificial famine they did not commit theft, stealing others' property. People were dying. Still they thought, "All right. God has given." That was the basic principle of Vedic civilization.*

Abhay knew that under the laws of nature there was no scarcity; by God's arrangement the earth could produce enough food. The trouble was man's greed. "There is no scarcity in the world," Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had said. "The only scarcity is of Kṛṣṇa consciousness." And this was how Abhay saw the 1943 famine. Now more than ever, this spiritual vision was relevant—Kṛṣṇa consciousness was the prime necessity. How else could man be checked from his evil propensities to become greedy, hoard, make war, and thus create misery for millions?

He had seen the heinous activities of the British in India—their cutting off the thumbs of the weavers so that Indian-made cotton goods could not compete with the foreign-made cloth, their shooting down of unarmed, innocent citizens, their creating artificial famine, their propagating the myth that Indian civilization was primitive—still, he did not believe that an independent Indian government would necessarily be an improvement. Unless the leadership was Kṛṣṇa conscious—and neither Gandhi nor Subhas Chandra Bose was—then the government would be able to provide no real solutions, only stopgap measures. Without obedience to the laws of God, as expressed by the scriptures and sages, governments would only increase human suffering.

Then Calcutta was bombed, day after day. The bombing was concentrated in specific areas, such as the Kittapur port facility and Syama

Bazaar in north Calcutta, very near Abhay's home at Sita Kanta Banerjee Lane. American planes had been leaving from airfields near Calcutta for targets in China and Japan, so the air raids on Calcutta seemed an inevitable retaliation. It was the Japanese striking back.

Or was it? Some said it was the forces of Subhas Chandra Bose, since the bombs fell mostly in the European quarter. But for the people of Calcutta it made little difference who was attacking. After the first bombing, people evacuated the city. Blackouts were imposed, and at night the entire city was dark.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *The whole Calcutta became vacant. Perhaps only myself and a few others remained. I sent my sons to Navadvīpa—of course, my daughter was married. My wife refused to go out of Calcutta. She said, "I'll be bombed, but I will not go." So I had to remain in Calcutta. I have seen bombing in Calcutta all night. I was just eating when there was the siren. So, the arrangement was that . . . in your house would be the shelter room. I was hungry, so I first finished eating. Then I went to the room, and the bombing began. Chee—Kyam! I was thinking that this was also Kṛṣṇa in another form. But that form was not very lovable.*

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In the midst of these calamities, Abhay felt more than ever the need to propagate Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He had something to say to the war-weary citizens of the world, and he longed for a more effective forum—a publication of some kind, a way to present the world's crises through the eyes of scripture in the same bold style as had his spiritual master. There was no shortage of ideas, and he had been saving money from his business for this very purpose.

Yet how could he dare produce such a journal when even learned *saṅgyāsīs*, senior disciples of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, were not. He never considered himself a great scholar among his Godbrothers. Although they called him *kavi* and now Bhaktivedānta, as a *gṛhastha* he wasn't expected to take the lead or publish his own journal.

But times had changed. The English journal *The Harmonist* had not been published since before Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's passing away. Now almost a decade had passed, and the Gaudiya Math had been too busy fighting in court to consider preaching. Long gone was the tireless spirit

that for ten consecutive years had produced the daily *Nadiyā Prakāśa*. No longer were four separately located printing presses pumping out transcendental literature under the direction of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's empowered son; the presses had been sold by Kuñjavihārī. Times had changed. The Gaudiya Math was only fighting, while the nondevotees were killing each other in a world war.

From his front room at 6 Sita Kanta Banerjee, Abhay conceived, wrote, edited, and typed the manuscript for a magazine. He designed a logo, a long rectangle across the top of the page. In the upper left-hand corner was a figure of Lord Caitanya, effulgent with rays of light like rays from the sun. In the lower right were silhouettes of a crowd of people, in darkness but groping to receive light from Lord Caitanya. And between Lord Caitanya and the people, the title unfurled like a banner — BACK TO GODHEAD. In the lower right corner was a picture of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī seated at his writing, looking up thoughtfully as he composed. Above the logo ran the motto "Godhead is Light, Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no Nescience." Below the logo were the following lines:

EDITED & FOUNDED

(Under the direct order of His Divine Grace
Sri Srimad Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada)
By Mr. ABHAY CHARAN DE.

Abhay had already gained some printing experience in connection with his business, and after completing the manuscript he brought it to Saraswat Press, the best printers in Bengal. He also hired an agent, Calcutta's prestigious booksellers Thacker, Spink and Company, who would take responsibility for distributing the journal to bookstores and libraries, including outlets in several foreign countries.

But when he went to buy paper, he met with government restrictions. Because of the war and the subsequent paper shortage, they wanted to assay what he had written in terms of the national needs; during this time of world crisis, an ordinary citizen's religious newspaper was hardly top priority.

Abhay's request for paper was perfunctorily denied, but he persisted.

He appealed that using paper to print the teachings of the Personality of Godhead was not a waste and not untimely in the present troubled atmosphere. Finally he obtained permission to print his first edition of *Back to Godhead*, a forty-four page publication.

Abhay Charan greeted his readers by defining his motto: "Godhead is Light, Nescience is darkness." When man forgets that he is the son of Godhead and identifies himself with the body, then he's in ignorance. He's like a man who's very concerned with the automobile's mechanism yet with no knowledge of the driver.

The defect of the present day civilisation is just like that. This is actually the civilisation of Nescience or illusion and therefore civilisation has been turned into militarisation. Everyone is fully concerned with the comforts of the body and everything related with the body and no one is concerned with the Spirit that moves the body although even a boy can realise that the motor-car mechanism has little value if there is no driver of the car. This dangerous ignorance of humanity is a gross Nescience and has created a dangerous civilisation in the form of militarisation. This militarisation which, in softer language, is Nationalisation is an external barrier to understanding human relations. There is no meaning in a fight where the parties do fight only for the matter of different coloured dresses. There must be therefore an understanding of human relation without any consideration of the bodily designation or coloured dresses.

"BACK TO GODHEAD" is a feeble attempt by the undersigned under the direction of His Divine Grace Sri Srimad Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Prabhupada, the celebrated founder and organiser of the Gaudiya Math activities—just to bring up a real relation of humanity with central relation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

That there is a great and urgent need of a literature like this is keenly felt by the leaders of all countries and the following statements will help much in the procedure.

It was 1944, and Abhay specifically addressed the crisis of world war. The world's political leaders were expressing their disgust at their people's suffering and scarcity. After four years of fighting, costing

millions of human lives, the second world war within twenty years was still scourging the earth. Although the end was in sight, leaders expressed not so much happiness and hope as weariness and uncertainty. Even if this war ended, would there be yet another war? Had man not yet grasped the vital lesson of how to live in peace?

Abhay quoted the Archbishop of India: "India guided by God can lead the world back to sanity." He quoted the President of the United States: "A programme, therefore, of moral re-armament for the world cannot fail to lessen the dangers of armed conflict. Such moral re-armament, to be most highly effective, must receive support on a world wide basis." He mentioned former President Herbert Hoover, who had affirmed that the world needs to return to moral and spiritual ideals, and he quoted a resolution by the British House of Commons affirming that spiritual principles are the common heritage of all people and that men and nations urgently need to acknowledge the sovereignty of God. He quoted Wendell Willkie, who, after his return from Russia, had reported millions of Russians killed, wounded, or missing in the war and millions more suffering from a winter of terrible scarcity and subjugation.

"What is true for the Russian people," Abhay wrote, "is also true for other people, and we Indians are feeling the same scarcity, the same want, and the same disgust." He quoted Britain's foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, who had been filled with lamentation and indignation at the miseries of war. He quoted the Archbishop of Canterbury:

In every quarter of earth men long to be delivered from the curse of War and to find in a world which has regained its peace, respite from the harshness and bitterness of the world they have known till now. But so often they want the Kingdom of Heaven without its King. The kingdom of God without God. And they cannot have it.

OUR RESOLVE MUST BE BACK TO GOD. We make plans for the future for peace amongst the nation and for civil security at home. That is quite right enough and it would be wrong to neglect it. But all our plans will come to ship-wreck on the rock of human selfishness unless we turn to God. *BACK TO GOD*, that is the chief need of England and of every nation.

He also quoted Sir Francis Younghusband of Britain: "Now that religion is everywhere attacked brutally, *we look to India, the very*

home of religion, for a sign." And finally he quoted Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan:

This war, when it would be won, would prove to be the breeding ground of other wars if the peace was not saved. It could happen only if powerful nations ceased to take pride and glory in their possessions which were based on labour and tribute of other weaker nations. This perhaps was what Sir Harcourt Butler meant when he said that the principles of Hinduism contained the essential elements for the saving of world civilisations.

And in another quote from Dr. Radhakrishnan, Abhay offered a statement he also used as one of the mottoes of the magazine:

We have to defeat tyranny in the realm of thought and create a will for world peace. Instruments for training the mind and educating human nature should be used to develop a proper social outlook without which institutional machinery was of little use.

Abhay expressed his confidence that the spiritual resources of India could be used by everyone, not only to enhance the glory of India but to benefit the whole world.

Next he told how he had come to begin *Back to Godhead* magazine—how he had written a letter two weeks before the disappearance of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and how his spiritual master had instructed him to preach in English.

Under the circumstances since 1936 up to now, I was simply speculating whether I shall venture this difficult task and that without any means and capacity; but as none have discouraged me . . . I have now taken courage to take up the work. . . . But at the present moment my conscience is dictating me to take up the work although the difficulties are not over for the present situation arising out of War conditions.

Abhay stated that his paper would contain only the transcendental messages of the great sages of India, especially Lord Caitanya, and that his duty would be simply to repeat them, just like a translator. He would not manufacture anything, and so his words would descend as transcendental sound for guiding people back to Godhead. He admitted that the

subject matters of *Back to Godhead*, being from a totally different sphere of consciousness, might seem dry to his readers, but he held that anyone who actually gave attention to his message would benefit.

Sugar-candy is never sweet to those who are suffering from the disease of the bile. But still, sugar-candy is the medicine for bilious patients. The taste of sugar-candy will gradually be revived if the bilious patient goes on taking sugar-candy regularly for the cure of the disease. We recommend the same process to the readers of "Back to Godhead."

Abhay focused on presenting the timeless message of the *Vedas*, but in the context of current crises. In his essay "Godhead and His Potentialities," he presented Vedic evidence and logical arguments to explain the transcendental nature of Godhead and the individual souls, both being deathless, blissful, and full of knowledge. Because men have forgotten and neglected their vital connection with God, they can never be satisfied in the material world, which is temporary and beset with unavoidable miseries. As spiritual souls, everyone is eternal by nature, and therefore everyone tries to avoid the onslaught of distresses and dangers, which come one after another. But the material body is meant for suffering and ultimately for destruction.

The exodus of the residents of Calcutta to other places out of fear of being raided by the Japanese bombs, is due to the same tendency of non-destructible existence. But those who are thus going away, do not remember that even after going away from Calcutta saved from the raids of the Japanese bombs, they are unable to protect their bodies as non-destructible in any part of the material universe, when the same bodies will be raided by the bombs of material nature in the form of threefold miseries.

The Japanese also—who are threatening the Calcutta people with ruthless air-raids for increasing their own happiness by possession of lands—do not know that their happiness is also temporary and destructible as they have repeatedly experienced in their own fatherland. The living beings, on the other hand, who are designed to be killed, are by nature eternal, impenetrable, invisible, etc. So all those living entities who are threatened to be killed as well as those who are threatening to conquer are all alike in the grip of the "Maya" potency and are therefore in the darkness.

Abhay wrote that never by their own devices could men escape the conditions of destruction. So many world leaders were seeking relief from the war, but all were useless, because their attempts for peace were within the material conception of life. Their attempts were like attempts to alleviate darkness with darkness; but darkness can be removed only by light.

Without light, any amount of speculation of the human mind (which is also a creation of the material nature) can never restore the living entities to permanent happiness. In that darkness any method of bringing peace in the world . . . can bring only temporary relief or distress, as we can see from all creations of the External Potency. In the darkness non-violence is as much useless as violence, while in the light there is no need of violence or non-violence.

Abhay did not deal exclusively with the war. In “Theosophy Ends in Vaishnavism,” he criticized the shortcomings of the fashionable ideas of Theosophy, which the followers of Madame Blavatsky had popularized in India.

In “Congregational Chanting,” he upheld the scriptural prediction that the *saṅkīrtana* movement of Lord Caitanya would spread to every town and village on the surface of the earth.

From this foretelling we can hope that the cult of Samkirtan will take very shortly *a universal form of religious movement*, and this universal religion—wherein there is no harm in chanting the Name of the Lord nor is there any question of quarrel—will continue for years, as we can know from the pages of authoritative scriptures.

The central theme of *Back to Godhead* was clearly the order of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. In its cover with its picture of a thoughtful Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, in its “Dedication,” in its statement of the magazine’s purpose, in its handling of issues, its analysis of Theosophy, its prediction of the spread of *saṅkīrtana*—in its every aspect, the theme of *Back to Godhead* was the order of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

There were also four shorter essays by other contributors, including Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī.

An advertisement on the back cover highlighted

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And a second major work: *Lord Chaitanya*, in two parts, totaling one thousand pages. Neither of these manuscripts was actually near completion, but Abhay was expressing his eagerness to undertake such large works on behalf of his spiritual master.

In attempting to print the second issue of *Back to Godhead*, Abhay encountered the same difficulty as before. Twice he requested permission to purchase newsprint, and twice the government denied his request. Paper was restricted on account of the war. On July 10, 1944, Abhay wrote a third letter.

With due respect, I beg to submit that under the instruction of His Divine Grace, Sri Srimad Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Maharaj, the spiritual head of the Gaudiya Vaishnavas, I had to start a paper under the caption,

"Back to Godhead." The very name will suggest the intention of starting such a paper in the midst of heavy turmoil through which the world is now passing. A copy of the same booklet is sent herewith for your kind perusal. In that booklet you shall find strong world opinions, even by many reputed politicians all over the world, in favour of such a movement to bring back the world into sanity by training the mind and educating human nature for the unshaking spiritual plane, considered to be the supreme need of humankind. I hope you will kindly go through the paper by making some time and I may draw your attention specially to the introductory portion.

Abhay also remarked that the editorial board of *Back to Godhead* felt that there was not so much a scarcity of paper as a scarcity of education. Taking the opportunity to preach, Abhay explained that although the ultimate supplier was the Personality of Godhead, godless men consider themselves the proprietors of all things.

Catastrophe that is now in vogue in the present war of supremacy, is guided by this false sense of proprietorship and therefore there is need of making propaganda amongst all human beings, in order to bring them back to the sense of the ultimate proprietorship of Godhead. . . .

Abhay conceded that there might indeed be a paper shortage in India. But in ancient times, he wrote, enlightened Indians had regularly sacrificed tons of valuable ghee and grains in the fire during religious sacrifices, and in those times there had not been any scarcity. People now, however, having abandoned all sacrifices to the Supreme Lord, were producing only scarcity.

Can we not therefore sacrifice a few reams of paper in the midst of many wastages, for the same purpose in order to derive greater benefit for the humankind? I request that the Government should take up this particular case in the light of spiritualism which is not within the material calculation. Even in Great Britain the Government has immensely supported a similar movement called The Moral Re-Armament Movement without consideration of the scarcity of paper which is more acute there than here.

Let there be a page only if not more for the publication of "Back to Godhead" for which we do not mind but my earnest request is that the Government should at least let there be a ventilation of the atmosphere for which

my paper "Back to Godhead" [is] meant. Kindly therefore give it a serious consideration and allow me to start even by one page every weekly or monthly as you think best without thinking it as ordinary waste of paper, for the sake of humanity and Godhead.

The letter was successful. Now, with veiled sarcasm, he headlined his second issue, "Thanks to the Government of India." He informed his readers, many of whom had been disappointed to learn that the government had curtailed his printing, that he would be able to continue his magazine every month. Abhay printed his letter to the government paper officer and also the reply granting him permission.

His articles were shorter, this time displaying the flair of a news columnist, as with philosophical criticism, verve, and a touch of ironic humor he commented on world leaders and crises. "Gandhi-Jinnah Talks," "Mr. Churchill's 'Humane World,'" "Mr. Bernard Shaw's Wishful Desire," and "Spontaneous Love of Godhead" comprised the issue.

"Gandhi-Jinnah Talks": "We are sorry to learn that Gandhi-Jinnah talks about unity of the Indian people have failed for the present." Abhay was not very optimistic about the results of such "occasional talks between several heads of communities." Even if they made a successful solution, it would break up and take the shape of another problem. They were looking for unity between Muslims and Hindus, but in Europe the fighting parties were Christians, and in Asia they were mostly Buddhists—but still they were fighting. "So fighting will go on between Hindu and Mohammedan, between Hindus and Hindus or between Mohammedan and Mohammedan, between Christians and Christians and between Buddhist and Buddhist till the day of annihilation." As long as there was the contaminated self-interest of sense gratification, there would be fighting between brother and brother, father and son, and nation and nation. Real unity would stand only on a plane of transcendental service to the Supreme. "Mahatma Gandhi," Abhay wrote, "is far above ordinary human being and we have all respects for him." But Abhay advised Gandhi to give up his activities on the material plane and rise to the transcendental plane of the spirit—then there could be talks about the unity of all people. Abhay cited *Bhagavad-gītā*'s definition of a *mahātmā*: one who concentrates his attention on the service of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He requested Mahatma Gandhi to adhere to

the teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā* and preach its message of surrender to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In this way, Mahatma Gandhi, through his influential position in the world, could bring about universal relief, simply by preaching the message of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

“Mr. Churchill’s ‘Humane World’ ”:

We are pleased to find that leaders of world politics such as Mr. Churchill have nowadays begun to think of a humane world and trying to get rid of the terrible national frenzy of hate. The frenzy of hatred is another side of the frenzy of love. The frenzy of love of Hitler’s own countrymen has produced the concomitant frenzy of hatred for others and the present war is the result of such dual side of a frenzy called love and hatred. So when we wish to get rid of the frenzy of hate, we must be prepared to get rid of the frenzy of so-called love. This position of equilibrium free from love and hatred is attained only when men are sufficiently educated.

Until men were educated to see the soul within the body, the dual frenzy of love and hate would continue, and a humane world would not be possible. “This introspection,” Abhay concluded, “is . . . easily attained by the service of Godhead. So Mr. Churchill’s Humane World implies that we must go ‘Back to Godhead.’ ”

“Mr. Bernard Shaw’s Wishful Desire”:

Mr. Bernard Shaw has congratulated Mahatma Gandhi on the occasion of the latter’s 76th birthday in the following words: “I can only wish this were Mr. Gandhi’s 35th birthday instead of his 76th.” We heartily join with Mr. Shaw in his attempt to subtract 41 years from the present age of Mahatma Gandhi.

But death does not respect our “wishful desire.” Neither Mr. Shaw nor Mahatma Gandhi, nor any other great personality, had ever been able to solve the problem of death.

The leaders of nations have . . . opened many factories for manufacturing weapons for the art of killing, but none has opened a factory to manufacture weapons for protecting man from the cruel hands of death, although our wishful desire is always not to die.

Men were preoccupied with the problem of how to get bread, although this problem was actually solved by nature. Man should try to solve the problem of death.

Bhagavad-gītā tells that the problem of death can be solved. Although death is everywhere in the material world, "One who attains to Me," says Kṛṣṇa, "never has to take his birth again in the material world." There is a spiritual world, nondestructible, and one who goes there does not come back to the region of death. Why should the leaders of nations cling to the planet of their birth, where death is inevitable? Abhay concluded, "We wish that in their ripe old age Mr. Shaw and Mahatma Gandhi will make combined effort to educate men to learn how to go back to home, back to Godhead."

After two issues of *Back to Godhead*, Abhay had to stop. Printing was costly. But he kept writing regularly, working at *Geetopanishad*, turning out new articles and philosophical purports on the scriptures—even in the same book in which he wrote his pharmaceutical formulas.

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One night, Abhay had an unusual dream. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta appeared before him, beckoning. He was asking Abhay to leave home and take *sannyāsa*. Abhay awoke in an intensely emotional state. "How horrible!" he thought. He knew it was not an ordinary dream, yet the request seemed so difficult and unlikely. Take *sannyāsa*! At least it was not something he could do immediately. Now he had to improve the business, and with the profits he would print books. He went on with his duties, but remained shaken by the dream.

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In 1945, the war over and India still in turmoil under British rule, Abhay saw a good opportunity to make his business more successful. In Lucknow, six hundred miles from Calcutta, he rented a building and opened his own factory, Abhay Charan De and Sons.

It was a major investment, requiring forty thousand rupees to start,

and he began on a larger scale than ever before. Also, according to law, to insure that he was not dealing in the black market or misusing chemicals, he had to employ three government inspectors. Yet despite a high overhead he established a good market, and his products were in demand. He closed his small operation in Calcutta and concentrated on the Lucknow business.

Although the building was known locally to be haunted by ghosts, Abhay had not been deterred. But when he began his operations, some of the workers came to him frightened: "Bābū, Bābū, there is a ghost!" Abhay then went through the entire building chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and after that there were no more complaints of ghosts.

On November 13, Abhay wrote to his servant Gouranga, mentioning some of his difficulties in Lucknow and asking him to come there to help. In this letter, Abhay spoke bitterly of his wife, Radharani, and children.

Gouranga Prabhu,

Please accept my obeisances. I received your letter dated 7th. Due to lack of time I could not reply in time. I stay here alone with some servants. If I leave now, then I have to close everything down. Due to my leaving once and closing the business, I have lost about 10,000 rupees and the good will has also been affected and my enemies have increased. That is why I am fighting, practically staking my whole life. I am staying here all alone in the middle of so many difficulties not for nothing. That's why I was writing to you repeatedly to come here. As soon as you receive this letter show it to Dubra. Take at least ten rupees from him and come here. When you come here, I will make arrangements to send money to your home. What's the point in holding you back with an excuse that there is no servant or maid-servant? I tried to serve them enough by keeping servants, maidservants and cooks. But up until today they have not become attached to devotional service. So I am no more interested about those affairs. When you come here, then I will go to Calcutta. If I see that they are interested about devotional service, then only will I maintain my establishment there. Otherwise, I will not maintain them any more. Bring a quilt for me.

Yours,
Abhay

The two interests—family and preaching—were conflicting. Radharani had never shown any interest in *Back to Godhead*. She

seemed to work against his enthusiasm, both for publishing and for earning. The business was called Abhay Charan De and Sons, and yet the sons were disinclined to help. And when he had called for his servant to join him in Lucknow, the family had objected, saying they needed Gouranga more there.

What was the use? The family was interested neither in backing him in his business nor in taking up the life of devotional service. And since his business was primarily an outcome of his family life, he resented that he had to give it so much of his energy. It was the old economic law by Marshall that he had learned in college: Without family affection, a man's economic impetus is weakened.

Of course, there could be a compatible balance between family service and devotional service. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had described two simultaneous obligations: bodily and spiritual. Social status, mental development, cleanliness, nourishment, and the struggle for existence were all bodily obligations; the activities of devotional service to Kṛṣṇa were spiritual. And the two should parallel one another. In Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's life, his family was a source of spiritual encouragement, and he used his social position to advance his preaching.

But Abhay's experience had been different; the two paths seemed to be at war, each threatening the other's existence. He felt himself operating somewhat like the materialists he had criticized in his writings, absorbed in the struggle for existence with insufficient time for self-realization. Although his family made more and more demands of him, he was feeling less inclined to work for them and more inclined to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It was a predicament. He could only push on diligently, support his family, expand his business, and hope for a great success so that he could revive his publishing.

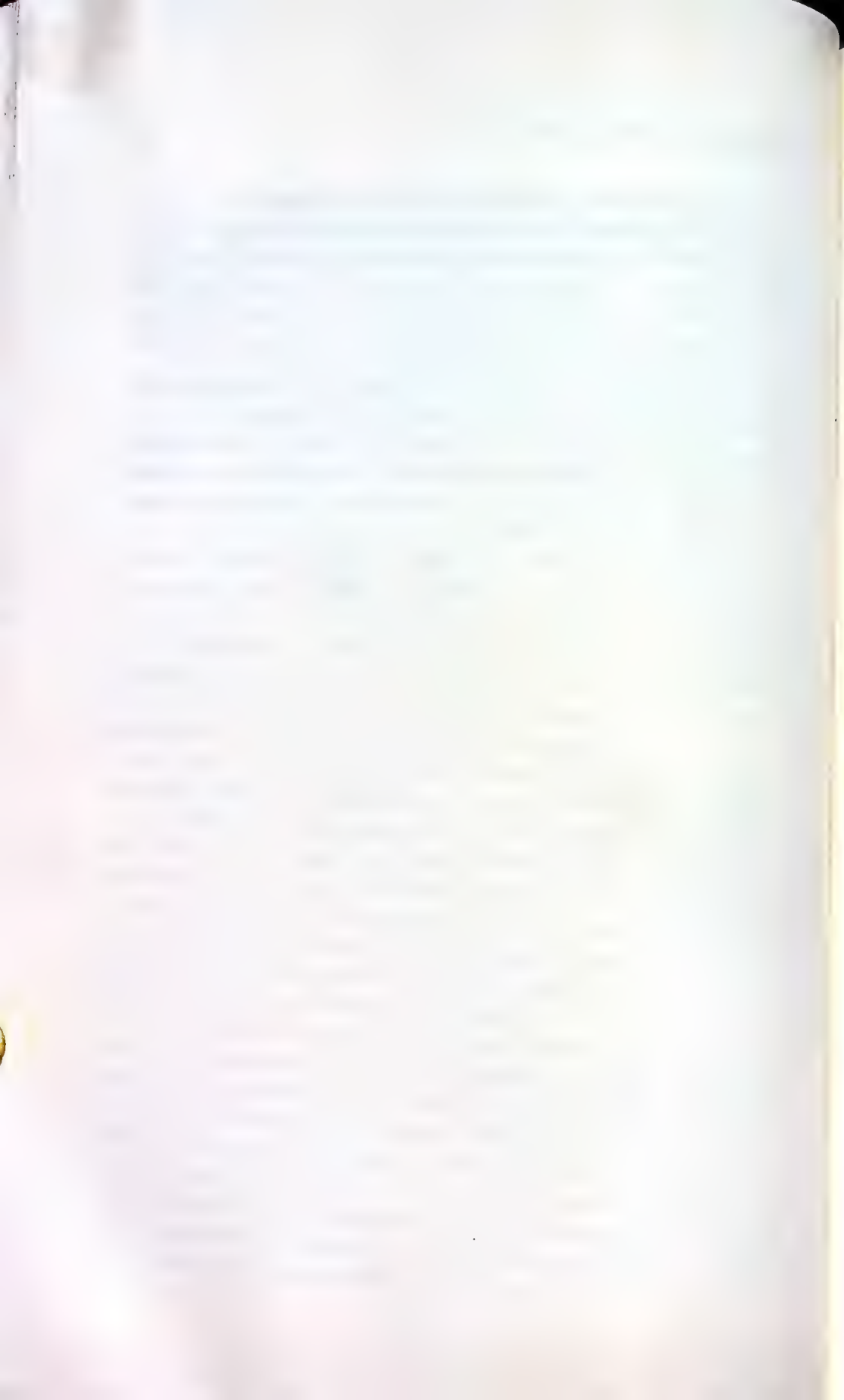
But the Lucknow factory seemed almost beyond his means. He had purposely begun on a large scale with the aim of making a larger profit. But monthly expenses were high, he had fallen behind in his rent, and now he was involved in a court case with the landlord. Although he was visiting Calcutta regularly and shipping raw materials from Calcutta to Lucknow daily, he always found his family members in Calcutta uncooperative. His servant Gouranga was also reluctant to work as Abhay required and was thinking of going back to live with his family. Abhay again wrote to Gouranga on the twenty-third.

Offering my humble obeisances at the feet of the Vaishnava. Gouranga Prabhu, I have received your postcard dated 18/11/45 and got all the informations. There is no need to come here just for a month after spending the money and then go back. For the present take 25 rupees from Dubra and go home. Write a letter to me after your arrival, then I will send the rest of your money in one or two installments by money order. Then from there you let me know when can you come here.

I have started my work here in a fairly big scale. You have seen that with your own eyes. . . . So if there is no income, who will spend [for a court] interrogation? Everything is on my head. The brother and sons are just eating and sleeping like a bunch of females and breaking the axe on my head.

You go home as soon as you get the money and try to come back as soon as possible.

Yours,
Sri Abhay Charan De



CHAPTER SIX

*creation of
Pakistan*

An Unknown Friend

*Let the sharp moralists accuse me of being illu-
sioned; I do not mind. Experts in Vedic activities
may slander me as being misled, friends and rela-
tives may call me frustrated, my brothers may call
me a fool, the wealthy mammonites may point me
out as mad, and the learned philosophers may assert
that I am much too proud. Still, my mind does not
budge an inch from the determination to serve the
lotus feet of Govinda, though I am unable to do it.*

—Mādhavendra Purī

Aside from his difficulties with business and family, Abhay had to survive the cataclysms of Indian independence and partition. He was not active politically, but was one of hundreds of millions affected by the violent dawn of Indian independence.

While Gandhi and the Hindu-dominated Congress were demanding a united free India, the Muslim League, led by M. A. Jinnah, called for partition and their own Muslim nation—Pakistan. The conflict raged. In August 1946 the outgoing British government invited Jawaharlal Nehru, Congress Party president, to form an interim national government; but the League objected—the Muslim cause would be denied. Jinnah had already declared August 16 “Direct Action Day,” which amounted to little in most parts of India but in Calcutta erupted in Hindu-Muslim rioting. In five days of violence, four thousand died, and thousands more were wounded. In the months that followed, Hindu-Muslim rioting repeatedly flared up throughout India.

Early in 1947, when the new viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, met with Indian political leaders to plan transfer of power, riots again broke out as Muslims demanded Pakistan. At the threat of civil war, Congress finally agreed on partition, and on July 18, the Indian independence bill passed without dissent. One month later India and Pakistan emerged as independent nations, with Jawaharlal Nehru as India's first prime minister.

Partition tore India, leaving five million Sikhs and Hindus in Pakistan and as many Muslims in India. And the great migration began. Refugees fleeing from Pakistan to India and from India to Pakistan clashed with each other and even with their own countrymen of the opposing faith, and the violence that erupted claimed hundreds of thousands of lives.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *Our independence movement was started by Mahatma Gandhiji for uniting all the different sections of the people. But actually the result was that instead of being united, India was partitioned. And the partition became so poisonous that formerly there was only sporadic Hindu-Muslim riots in some places, but now there was organized fighting between Pakistan and Hindustan. So actually we were not being united, we were being separated.*

The Hindus would go to the mosque of the Muslim and break it, and the Muslim would go to the temples of the Hindus and break the idol. And they will think, "We have finished the Hindus' God." Just like the Hindus also think, "Oh, we have broken their God." They are all ignorant. God cannot be Hindu. God cannot be Muslim. God cannot be Christian. God is God.

We have seen in 1947—Hindu-Muslim fighting. One party was Hindu, the other party was Muslim. They fought, and so many died, and after death there was no distinction who was Hindu or who was Muslim—the municipal men gathered them together in piles to throw them somewhere. They fought, and in Baghbazar there were heaps of dead bodies. And when it is a dead body, nobody could understand who was Hindu and who was Muslim. Simply it was to be cleared from the road.

Abhay was not expecting Indian independence to bring any real solutions. Unless the leaders were God conscious, what change would there be? Now he saw that instead of suffering at the hand of a foreign rule, the people were free to suffer under their own countrymen. In fact, the fighting and suffering had increased.

Throughout the years of India's political struggles, Abhay had never lost his desire to propagate Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He had seen how promises of unity and independence had brought mostly higher prices and civic mismanagement. He had seen neighborhoods where Indians had lived peacefully for generations erupt in hatred and rioting, in the wake of British and Indian diplomatic manipulations. It was as Śrīla Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī had described it:

Persons who are strongly entrapped by the consciousness of enjoying material life, and who have therefore accepted as their leader or guru a similar blind man attached to external sense objects, cannot understand that the goal of life is to return home, back to Godhead, and engage in the service of Lord Vishnu. As blind men guided by another blind man miss the right path and fall into a ditch, materially attached men led by another materially attached man are bound by the ropes of fruitive labour, which are made of very strong cords, and they continue again and again in materialistic life, suffering the threefold miseries.

The Vaiṣṇava prays to his spiritual master, "who has opened my eyes with the torchlight of transcendental knowledge," and he feels obliged to help humanity by bearing the same torch. As a representative of the eternal Vaiṣṇava *paramparā*, Abhay wanted to shed the light of transcendental knowledge onto the field of current crises. That had been the purpose of *Back to Godhead*, although since 1944 he had been unable to print the magazine.

But even without the means to publish, Abhay continued writing. His most ambitious project was *Geetopanishad*, his translation and commentary of *Bhagavad-gītā*. Gandhi and others often spoke of the wisdom of *Bhagavad-gītā*—Indians never forgot their *Gītā*—but most proponents did not teach it as Kṛṣṇa had taught it. They would not recognize Lord Kṛṣṇa, the speaker of their *Gītā*, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but would extract His words as slogans to bolster their own philosophies. Whether political leaders, religious leaders, or scholars, they almost invariably made their own symbolic and allegorical interpretations. Abhay wanted to present *Bhagavad-gītā* as is. It was to be twelve-hundred pages—three illustrated, beautifully bound volumes. For Abhay the books were already a reality, from which he was separated only by time.

Over the past two years he had accumulated hundreds of manuscript pages. He wrote in notebooks and on loose papers and then typed the numbered manuscript pages. He could never give the book his full time, but gradually it began to take shape.

He also preached Lord Caitanya's message through letters, writing to many leaders in the government, to respectable acquaintances, and to people whose articles he had read or whose activities had caught his eye in the newspaper. Presenting himself as a humble servant, he wrote to them of his ideas on how India's original Kṛṣṇa conscious culture could be applied as the successful solution to all manners of dilemmas. Sometimes his letters drew replies, and Abhay would respond, fanning the sparks of interest wherever he found them.

A well-known reformer, Mahendra Pratap Raja, was forming what he called the World Federation. Abhay had read a news sheet, which Mr. Pratap had published from Vṛndāvana, in which he addressed all nations and peoples of the world and called for a unity of mankind.

Abhay wrote to him suggesting that Lord Kṛṣṇa's teachings in *Bhagavad-gītā* provided a theistic science capable of uniting all religions. Mr. Pratap replied, in May 1947, "I admire your deep study of Shreemad Bhagwat Geeta. I myself am a great admirer of the great classic. I assure you that I am working strictly according to the book." Mr. Pratap mentioned his book, *Religion of Love*, and suggested that Abhay read it if he wanted to know the World Federation's view of religion. "In the meanwhile," Mr. Pratap wrote, "I do not agree to your suggestion of making the name of 'Krishna' or 'Govinda' as the basis of the Unity of Religions. This would amount to conversion and won't lead to unity of religions. I highly appreciate your efforts in the direction of 'Back to Godhead.'"

Abhay got the book, read it, and in July 1947, while he was visiting Kanpur, wrote a reply. He had traveled to Kanpur not as a spiritual teacher but as a pharmaceutical salesman. Yet a typewriter had been available, and out had come his preaching.

In continuation of my last post card, I beg to inform you that I have finished the reading of your book Religion of Love. In my opinion the whole thesis is based on the philosophy of Pantheism and the approach is made by the services of mankind. Religion of Love is the true religious idea but if the approach is made through the service of mankind only, then the process is made imperfect, partial and unscientific.

The true Religion of Love is perfectly inculcated in the Bhagwat Geeta. . . . Besides you have not quoted any authority for all your statements. So it is more or less dogmatic. If different men put different dogmatic views about religion and its essentials, who is to be accepted and who is not to be? Therefore the approach shall be and must be authoritative, scientific and universal.

Abhay then gave a summary of the *Bhagavad-gītā* in ten points, concluding, "The highest service that can be rendered to Mankind is, therefore, to preach the philosophy and religion of Bhagwat Geeta for all time, all places and all people."

But extended philosophical dialogue was not usually the result of his letters. In 1947, when Abhay wrote to high government officers of the newly formed government of India suggesting a remedy for riots, they turned him away. When he asked to talk with the governor of West Bengal, the governor's secretary replied, "His Excellency regrets that he is unable to grant you an interview at present, owing to heavy pressure of work." When he wrote to the assistant secretary to the minister of education, an assistant to the assistant secretary replied, "The Government of India regret that they are unable to accede to your request."

Sometimes official interest took the form of a patronizing pat on the head: "I am sure your scheme for establishing peace will meet with response from our Prime Minister." And another: "He [the minister of education] is glad to see you are taking to route out communalism. He suggests that you get in touch with . . ."

A local official asked not to be seen:

I thank you for all that you have written and the fine sentiments which you have expressed. It is no use arguing the matter, as I do not think that I can serve any useful purpose by joining the organization which you wish to set up. And therefore you need not take the trouble of seeing me. I wish you, however, all success.

In October, after the Calcutta riots of 1947, Abhay wrote to the chairman of the rehabilitation committee, who replied:

Regarding hari kirtan and prasadam, you may make any program of your own, but I am afraid I am not interested in the same. Nor my committee, and therefore there is no necessity of your meeting with me.

Abhay was fulfilling his role as a Vaiṣṇava preacher, and the secretaries of the various government offices were recognizing and addressing him as such. But they could not appreciate his applications of the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā* and his suggestions for *hari-kīrtana*. Occasionally, however, someone seemed interested. Mr. N. P. Asthana, high court advocate, replied:

I am very much obliged to you for your letter re: your broad scheme about spiritual improvement. I thoroughly appreciate the fine feelings which have prompted you to write this letter and the kindness with which you have considered my query. I have been a student of Bhagwat Geeta and have also imbibed some of its teachings, but I still lack a good deal and will be glad to be guided by a person of your accomplishment. You may kindly, therefore, send your scheme to me, on receipt of which I will be able to express my views.

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It was inevitable that Abhay would think of engaging Mahatma Gandhi in devotional service. Because of his lifetime of courageous, ascetic, and moral activities on behalf of his countrymen, Mahatma Gandhi had great power to influence the Indian masses. As with Mahendra Pratap of the World Federation, Mahatma Gandhi's idea of serving God was to try to bring happiness to man through politics and through his own invented methods. As one Englishman had said of Mahatma Gandhi, "He is either a saint amongst the politicians or a politician amongst the saints." But be that as it may, he was not as yet fully engaged in pure devotional service, and his activities were not those of a *mahātmā* as described in *Bhagavad-gītā*. The *Gītā* defines a *mahātmā* as one who fully engages in worshiping Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, always chanting His glories. The *mahātmā* encourages others to surrender to Kṛṣṇa.

But because as a young man Abhay had been a follower of Gandhi's, Abhay had a special feeling for him. Of course, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had later convinced him to engage exclusively in devotional service. But now Abhay felt his old friendship for Gandhi, even though

Gandhi was a towering figure of worldwide fame and Abhay unknown both to Gandhi and to the world.

On December 7, 1947, Abhay wrote to Gandhi from Kanpur. Gandhi was living at the Birla Mansion in Delhi, where large military forces throughout the city discouraged Hindu-Muslim rioting. Gandhi's secretary, Pyarelal Nayar, described Gandhi at this time as "the saddest man one could picture." The men he had led in the struggle for Indian independence, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, and others, had taken the leadership of the nation. And Gandhi, with his doctrines of non-violence, unity, and agrarianism, was now at odds with them in many ways. He feared he was becoming an anachronism. His former colleagues admired him but rejected his leadership. All his programs—Hindu-Muslim unity, nonviolence, upliftment for the poor—although praised throughout the world, were failures in the India of 1947. On a recent visit to a Muslim refugee camp, a crowd of Muslims who surrounded his car had cursed him, and at a public prayer meeting a Hindu crowd had shouted him down and ended his meeting when he had attempted to read from the *Koran*. At seventy-eight years, Gandhi was physically weak and melancholy.

In all likelihood, Abhay's letter would never reach him. Abhay knew it. Sending a letter to Gandhi would be like putting a note in a bottle and sending it to sea. It would arrive in the flood of mail, and Gandhi would be too busy to see it. But Abhay sent it nonetheless.

Dear Friend Mahatmajee,

Please accept my respectful Namaskar. I am your unknown friend but I had to write to you at times and again although you never cared to reply them. I sent you my papers "Back to Godhead" but your secretaries told me that you have very little time to read the letters and much less for reading the magazines. I asked for an interview with you but your busy secretaries never cared to reply this. Anyway, as I am your very old friend although unknown to you, I am writing to you in order to bring you to the rightful position deserved by you. As a sincere friend I must not deviate from my duty towards a friend like your good self.

I tell you as a sincere friend that you must immediately retire from active politics if you do not desire to die an inglorious death. You have 125 years to live as you have desired to live but if you die an inglorious death it is no worth. The honour and prestige that you have obtained during the

course of your present lifetime, were not possible to be obtained by anyone else within the living memory. But you must know that all these honours and prestiges were false in as much as they were created by the Illusory Energy of Godhead called the Maya. By this falsity I do not mean to say that your so many friends were false to you nor you were false to them. By this falsity I mean illusion or in other words the false friendship and honours obtained thereby were but creation of Maya and therefore they are always temporary or false as you may call it. But none of you neither your friends nor yourself know this truth.

A *sādhū* is not supposed to flatter but to cut. This is the basis of his friendship—that he cuts away the illusion of the materialistic person. Mahatma Gandhi, forsaken by his friends, bitterly disappointed at the outcome of the long, hard struggle for Indian independence, and apprehensive about the future, had been reduced to a position in which he might be able to realize that his friends and work were ultimately illusory. Thus it was the perfect time for him to comprehend Abhay's message.

Now by the Grace of God that Illusion is going to be cleared and thus your faithful friends like Acharya Kripalini and others are accusing you for your inability at the present moment to give them any practical programme of work as you happened to give them during your glorious days of non-co-operation movement. So you are also in a plight to find out a proper solution for the present political tangle created by your opponents. You should therefore take a note of warning from your insignificant friend like me, that unless you retire timely from politics and engage yourself cent percent in the preaching work of Bhagwat Geeta, which is the real function of the Mahatmas, you shall have to meet with such inglorious deaths as Mussolini, Hitler, . . . or Lloyd George met with.

For years Abhay had wanted to approach Mahatma Gandhi with this message. In fact, he had written before, although it had been of no avail. But now he was convinced that unless Gandhi got out of politics he would soon die "an inglorious death." That Gandhi was remaining active in politics rather than preaching devotional service put him in need of a warning. Abhay was writing to save a friend.

You can easily understand as to how some of your political enemies in the garb of friends (both Indian and English) have deliberately cheated you and have broken your heart by doing the same mischief for which you have struggled so hard for so many years. You wanted chiefly Hindu-Moslem unity in India and they have tactfully managed to undo your work, by creation of the Pakistan and India separately. You wanted freedom for India but they have given permanent dependence of India. You wanted to do something for the upliftment of the position of the Bhangis but they are still rotting as Bhangis even though you are living in the Bhangi colony. They are all therefore illusions and when these things will be presented to you as they are, you must consider them as God-sent. God has favoured you by dissipating the illusion you were hovering in and by the same illusion you were nursing those ideas as Truth.

Abhay dutifully attempted to inform Gandhi that there was nothing absolute within this relative world. *Ahimsā*, or nonviolence, must always be followed by violence, just as light is followed by darkness. Nothing is absolute truth in the dual world. "You did not know this," wrote Abhay, "neither you ever cared to know this from the right sources and therefore all your attempts to create unity were followed by disunity and Ahimsa was followed by Himsa."

Abhay pointed out that Gandhi had never undergone the standard practice for spiritual advancement, namely, accepting a bona fide spiritual master. Although *Bhagavad-gītā* declares the necessity of accepting a *guru* in disciplic succession, Gandhi was well known for listening to his inner voice and for extracting ideas from various writers like Ruskin and Thoreau and mixing them with teachings from the New Testament and the *Gītā*. Had Gandhi approached a *guru*, said Abhay, he would not have become bewildered within the sphere of relative truth.

In the Katha Upanishad it is ordered that one must approach the bona fide Guru who is not only well versed in all the scriptures of the world but is also the realised soul in Brahman the Absolute—in order to learn the science of Absolute Truth. So also it is instructed in the Bhagwat Geeta as follows:

Tad Biddhi Pranipatena Pariprasnena Sebaya
Upadekshyanti Te Jnanam Jnanina Tatwadarshina
(4/34)

But I know that you never underwent such transcendental teaching except some severe penances which you invented for your purpose as you have invented so many things in the course of experimenting with the relative truths. You might have easily avoided them if you had approached the Guru as above mentioned.

Recognizing Mahatma Gandhi's godly qualities and austerities, Abhay requested him to employ his moral elevation for surrendering to the Absolute Truth. Abhay urged him to get out of politics immediately.

But your sincere efforts to attain some Godly qualities by austerities, etc. surely have raised you to some higher platform which you can better utilise for the purpose of the Absolute Truth. If you, however, remain satisfied with such temporary position only and do not try to know the Absolute Truth, then surely you are to fall down from the artificially exalted position under the laws of Nature. But if you want really to approach the Absolute Truth and want to do some real good to the people in general all over the world, which shall include your ideas of unity, peace and non-violence, then you must give up the rotten politics immediately and rise up for the preaching work of the philosophy and religion of "Bhagwat Geeta" without offering unnecessary and dogmatic interpretation on them. I had occasionally discussed this subject in my paper "Back to Godhead" and a leaf from the same is enclosed herewith for your reference.

I would only request you to retire from politics at least *for a month only* and let us have discussion on the Bhagwat Geeta. I am sure, thereby, that you shall get a new light from the result of such discussions not only for your benefit but for the benefit of the world at large—as I know that you are sincere, honest and a moralist.

Awaiting your early reply with interest.

Yours Sincerely,
Abhay Charan De

There was no reply. A month later, Gandhi announced that he would fast until death unless India made a payment of 550 million rupees to Pakistan, a previous condition of the partition agreement. At first Hindu refugees from Pakistan demonstrated outside Gandhi's darkened room, chanting, "Let Gandhi die!" But as he fasted, each day closer to death, he aroused the heartfelt concern of the nation, and the government leaders repaid the money to Pakistan. Then, great crowds approached

him, chanting, "Let Gandhi live!" Meanwhile, Hindu-Muslim violence continued.

On January 30, the day after he had drafted a new constitution for the Congress Party, Gandhi took his evening meal, worked at his spinning wheel, then walked towards his evening prayer meeting and was shot, three times in the chest. He died, crying out the name of God—"He *Rāma!*" Abhay's letter of the previous month suddenly read like a prophecy. But it had not been read by the person for whom it had been intended.

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When the directors of the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial National Fund invited suggestions on how to commemorate Gandhi's life and work, Abhay wrote to them and simultaneously to Vallabhbhai Patel, India's deputy prime minister, proposing "the Gandhian way" to use the funds.

Gandhi's whole life was dedicated to the service of humanity at large with special interest for raising the moral standard. His later activities showed that he was equal to everyone and all the people of the world knew him more as a spiritual leader than a mere politician. Devotion to Godhead was his ultimate aim and when I say that his sacred memory should be perpetrated not in the ordinary way but in the Gandhian way, I mean that fitting respects to his memory will be done in the following manner.

Abhay wrote of a Mahatma Gandhi rarely described: Gandhi as a Vaiṣṇava. Despite his pressing political activities, Gandhi had never missed his daily prayer meetings in the evenings. Even at the time of his assassination, he had been on his way to attend his daily *kīrtana*. Abhay stressed that it was because of Gandhi's regular participation in congregational prayer that he had been strong in his work to raise the moral standard of humanity. "Gandhiji minus his spiritual activities," Abhay wrote, "is an ordinary politician. But actually he was a saint amongst the statesmen. . . ." Abhay wrote that it had been Lord Caitanya who had originated the congregational chanting of the names of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma, and His followers the six Gosvāmīs had left a wealth of literature for discussion and understanding. The Memorial Fund board should take this lesson from Mahatmajī's practical life and develop it on a large scale.

Therefore, one fitting memorial to Mahatma Gandhi would be to institute daily congregational readings from the *Bhagavad-gītā*. When peoples' spiritual instincts were kindled by daily prayer meetings, then they would develop the highest qualities in their character.

Abhay had a second suggestion. Gandhi was known for his attempts to enable the lower classes to enter the temples, and in Noakhali he had installed the Deity of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa for the ordinary man to worship. Although this was generally taken as a side issue of Gandhi's work, Abhay took it as the essence—that Gandhi's was a theistic movement. Abhay explained that although there were hundreds and thousands of temples in India, they were not being properly managed, and therefore educated citizens were neglecting them. In the original Vedic culture, the purpose of the temples had been to nurture spiritual culture. If the temples of India could be reorganized as vital spiritual centers, then the disturbed minds of the day could be trained for life's higher duties. "Such education and practice," Abhay wrote, "can help man in realizing the existence of God, without whose sanction, according to Mahatma Gandhi, 'not a blade of grass moves.'"

He also referred to Gandhi's *harijan* movement, which most people saw as Gandhi's humanitarian effort to grant equal rights to untouchables, whom Gandhi had recognized as *harijan*, "people of God." Abhay stressed that this was also an essentially spiritual aspect of Gandhi's life. But rather than simply rubber-stamping an untouchable as "*harijan*," Abhay argued, there must be a systematic program for elevating people of the lower classes. This program was taught in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and could best be applied under the guidance of a bona fide devotee of the Lord. Abhay volunteered to take up the work on behalf of the Memorial Board. If the board, in attempting to commemorate Gandhi's efforts and accomplishments, neglected the essential spiritual aspects of Gandhi's life, Abhay warned, "his memory will soon be dead, as has been the lot of other politicians."

Perhaps they saw Abhay as another opportunist seeking money or as a sectarian religionist. But Abhay saw himself as a lowly servant of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Seeing certain Vaiṣṇava qualities in the character of Mahatma Gandhi, Abhay took the opportunity to introduce his spiritual master's message to the world. And by so doing, he paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, praising him as a great devotee interested in

kīrtana, temple worship, and elevating unfortunates to become people of God.

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While on business in Madurai, in South India, Abhay showed some of his writings to Muthuswamy Chetty, another medical salesman. Mr. Chetty was impressed and felt he could persuade his wealthy friend Dr. Allagappa, the famous "Birla of the South," to finance the printing. In April of 1948, Mr. Chetty wrote to Abhay, saying that he had been prompted to help Abhay "for something God has meant." He asked Abhay Charan to send him the complete *Geetopanishad* manuscript so that he could present it to Dr. Allagappa in Madras. Mr. Chetty had already written Dr. Allagappa about the "first-class work *Geetopanishad*, to cover 1,200 pages of royal size" and had urged him to publish it for the benefit of religious-minded people. He had also mentioned that Abhay had been trying to publish the book since 1946.

Dr. Allagappa soon replied to Mr. Chetty that he was interested, and Mr. Chetty wrote to Abhay, "So I am on my way to help you, and only God must help me." As for talking business with Dr. Allagappa, there would be no need, since "once he does it, it is for the sake of benevolence. . . ." Anticipating success, Mr. Chetty invited Abhay to come to Madras to meet Dr. Allagappa. "There he will arrange for what God has meant for you to do in your religious duty." In Madras, Abhay would be able to check and correct the proofs of the manuscript and see the book through the various stages of printing. It was a big opportunity, and Abhay was not one to miss an opportunity. If the book could be published, it would be a great victory in his mission to fulfill the request of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

But then the worst thing happened. The manuscript was stolen. It was the only copy, the one Abhay was keeping safely at home. He questioned his family and servants—no one knew what had happened. Abhay was baffled; so much work had been undone. He felt he had worked so many months for nothing. Although he couldn't prove anything, he suspected that his servant or even his son might have done it, with a motive for raising money. But it remained a mystery.

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During 1949, Abhay wrote articles in Bengali and submitted them to his Godbrother B. P. Keśava Mahārāja, who published them in his *Gauḍīya Patrikā*. Abhay's format for addressing world problems was the same as his spiritual master's. Even at their first meeting, in 1922, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had countered Abhay's nationalistic arguments by stressing that the real crisis in the world was neither social nor political nor anything material, but was simply the dearth of transcendental knowledge. Abhay simply elaborated on this theme. He never advocated that the ordinary concerns of the world be disregarded, but he stressed that crises can be solved only when the leadership is God conscious. If Kṛṣṇa consciousness were put first, other concerns could be brought into line. But without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, so-called solutions were only folly.

Abhay began his first Bengali article by quoting an editorial from the Allahabad edition of the Calcutta newspaper *Amrita Bazar*. The editor had sorely lamented that India's worst troubles had not yet ended, despite national independence.

The national week has begun. The memories of Jallianwalla Bagh and political serfdom no longer trouble us. But our trouble is far from being at an end. In the dispensation of Providence, mankind cannot have any rest. If one kind of trouble goes, another quickly follows. India, politically free, is faced with difficulties no less serious than those that troubled us under a foreign rule.

Abhay seized on this editorial reflection as proof of the basic defect of all worldly plans for amelioration. He pointed out that although India had been subjugated by foreign rulers since the time of Muhammad Ghorī (A.D. 1050), India prior to that had never been subjugated. In those days, India had been a God conscious nation. It was when India's leaders had abandoned their spiritual heritage that India had fallen.

Thus, Indians should see that they were now being punished by the stringent laws of material nature. "The honorable editor of *Amrita Bazar Patrika*," Abhay noted, "has written so sadly, 'If one trouble goes, another quickly follows,' but that was stated in the Bhagwat Geeta a long time previously." It was the same theme he had stated in his 1944 *Back to Godhead* articles and the theme of so many of his letters also: Man, due to his neglect of the Supreme Lord, is being punished by material nature, which is directly controlled by the Supreme Lord. Men may write

newspaper articles, pass measures at meetings and conferences, and attempt to overcome nature by scientific research, yet they will remain unable to surmount nature's law. As they try to escape their punishments, the Supreme Lord will cast them deeper into illusion, and they will fail miserably. Abhay quoted an appropriate Bengali saying: "I was trying to make a statue of Shiva, but I ended up making a monkey."

In order to rid the world of misery and bring about happiness, we have now created the atomic bomb. Seeing the all-pervading destruction which could take place in the near future by atomic reactions, Western thinkers have become greatly disturbed. Some people try to give consolation, saying that we will only use this atomic energy to bring about happiness in the world. This is also another enigma of the illusory potency.

The problem, Abhay explained, was that the world was lacking Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees. Leaders under the influence of material nature could never solve the problems of the world. Materialistic illusion was especially prevalent in the Western countries, which Indians should not try to imitate. Abhay prophesied, however, that Kṛṣṇa consciousness would one day reach the West.

In the Western countries there has never been any discussion of the relation between the atomic individual soul and the Supreme complete conscious Personality of Godhead. Neither their activities nor their state in ultimate perfection has been investigated. That is why, even though they have made so much material advancement, they are squirming in the burning poison of sensualism. . . . We can be absolutely certain that India's real peace formula will one day reach their ears.

Abhay's articles began appearing regularly in the *Gauḍīya Patrikā*. His Godbrothers appreciated his writings; his denunciation of the materialistic mentality was reminiscent of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's. In Abhay's hands, the *Bhagavad-gītā*'s concept of the *asura* (demon) was no longer merely a depiction of a mythological or legendary enemy; the *asuras* had come to life in the modern-day Hitler, Churchill, or even an Indian prime minister. But, as Abhay pointed out, his denunciation of the misleaders was not his own; he was only repeating the words of Kṛṣṇa.

During 1950-51 he continued his letter-writing, attempting to gain a hearing with various organizations and leaders. He wrote the World Pacifist Committee, the president of India, and the minister of education. He wrote to the Indian Congress for Cultural Freedom, which wrote back suggesting that Abhay had written them by mistake. He wrote to an official of the All-Religions Conference in Bombay, advising that because of their approach nothing practical would come out of their conference; "The practical solution is lying in the transcendental message of Sree Krishna, the Personality of Godhead, as given by Him in the Bhagwat Geeta."

On September 14, 1951, he corresponded with Daniel Bailey of the *American Reporter*, a magazine published by the American embassy in New Delhi. Abhay pointed out that the philosophy of understanding the Absolute Truth, as realized by the sages of India, was higher than attempts to combine East and West. Mr. Bailey replied that he was aware of Eastern philosophical and religious influence in the West and cited the progress of a yoga mission in New York City, which he said had some influence on the Protestants in America. But when Abhay asked if one of his articles could appear in the *American Reporter*, Mr. Bailey replied, "If we were to give considerable space in the *American Reporter* to, say, the *Gita*, we in all fairness would have to give equal space to the other philosophies and our desire is not to endorse or condemn any of them, but simply to assist in a better understanding. . . ." In a further reply, Abhay differed with Mr. Bailey's contention that people should be encouraged to make their own interpretation of religion: "Less intelligent men are always guided by those who are superior in knowledge in all spheres of life."

Abhay even wrote to the Ford Foundation in Detroit, and a staff assistant wrote back, "Regret to advise you that we are unable to pursue your suggestions concerning the establishment of an association of the intelligent class of people. The Ford Foundation has no program in which specific ideas such as you describe might be included."

Although most of his suggestions were rejected, occasionally he received words of appreciation. A certain Doctor Muhammad Sayyid, Ph.D., a professor at the University of Allahabad, wrote, "You seem to have assimilated the universal teaching of ancient India, which is . . . really laudable." And the governor of Uttar Pradesh replied, "You

are doing noble work, for nothing is nobler than to be God minded.”

Not only was Abhay giving advice in his letters, but he was hinting that he could also give practical help. If he could obtain institutional backing, he was prepared to do many things: teach classes, manage temples, teach temple worship, and initiate devotees, as well as organize various kinds of field work to propagate the principles of *Bhagavad-gītā*. Usually he did not spell out exactly how things should be done, but he pointed to the philosophical defects in the present methods and the superiority of working in accord with the Vedic literature. By the grace of his spiritual master, he knew the science of applying *Bhagavad-gītā* to almost any situation; if someone would only show interest, he could teach that person the superiority of working according to *Bhagavad-gītā*.

After attending a meeting in which a prominent industrialist had stressed harmonious relationships between labor and management in his factory, Abhay wrote a long letter, suggesting the man consider the good effects the congregational chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa could produce. Since the factory had a special employees' club and lounge, Abhay suggested that the workers assemble there and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Abhay urged everyone to surrender to Kṛṣṇa, but most people had their own philosophies and took his spirit to be sectarian or proselytizing. But *Bhagavad-gītā* was universal, Abhay wrote, and God could not be omitted from any program, even in the name of a secular state. Kṛṣṇa, as the father of all living beings, had jurisdiction over all programs, organizations, and governments. Indians especially should appreciate the universal scope of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Although Abhay always had a plan of action behind his suggestions, he first sought the interest of his correspondent. There wasn't much interest, and he was repeatedly turned down, but he never felt discouraged; he always anticipated finding a sympathizer. He kept copies of all his letters and their replies, a word of appreciation or a slight show of interest from a correspondent being sufficient to elicit from Abhay another thoughtful reply.

He had developed a keen sense of dedication to Lord Caitanya's mission, without expecting leadership from the Gaudiya Math. He still cherished the idea that his Godbrothers would soon come together and preach, but he didn't put any energy in the *maṭhas*, since to do so would mean to become involved in one of the factions. Staying clear of the

Gaudiya Math's internal fray, Abhay continued his letter-writing campaign alone, introducing himself as preacher of *Bhagavad-gītā* and editor of *Back to Godhead* magazine.

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In 1948, Abhay closed his Lucknow factory. He had fallen behind in employees' salaries, and since 1946 he had been paying past rent in installments. But when sales dropped off, continuing the factory became impossible. He lost everything.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *I started a big laboratory in Lucknow. Those were golden days. My business flourished like anything. Everyone in the chemical business knew. But then, gradually, everything dwindled.*

With the help of some acquaintances in Allahabad, he opened a small factory there, in the same city where his Prayag Pharmacy had failed fifteen years before. He moved to Allahabad with his son Brindaban and continued manufacturing medicines. While the rest of the family remained at Banerjee Lane in Calcutta, Abhay continued his traveling; but now he was often away for months at a time.

And then he had the dream a second time. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī appeared before him; again he was beckoning, indicating that Abhay should take *sannyāsa*. And again Abhay had to put the dream aside. He was a householder with many responsibilities. To take *sannyāsa* would mean to give up everything. He had to earn money. He now had five children. "Why is Guru Mahārāja asking me to take *sannyāsa*?" he thought. It was not possible now.

The Allahabad business was unsuccessful. "At present, the condition of our business is not very good," he wrote his servant Gouranga, who had asked to rejoin him. "When the condition gets better and if you are free at that time I will call for you." He worked earnestly, but results were meager.

As with everything else, Abhay saw his present circumstances through the eyes of scripture. And he could not help but think of the verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*

*yasyāham anugṛhṇāmi
hariṣye tad-dhanam śanaiḥ*

*tato 'dhanam tyajanty asya
sva-janā duḥkha-duḥkhitam*

“When I feel especially merciful towards someone, I gradually take away all his material possessions. His friends and relatives then reject this poverty-stricken and most wretched fellow.”

He had heard Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī quote the verse, and now he thought of it often. He took it that his present circumstances were controlled by Lord Kṛṣṇa, who was forcing him into a helpless position, freeing him for preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *Somehow or other, my intention for preaching the message of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu increased, and the other side decreased. I was not disinclined, but Kṛṣṇa forced me: “You must give it up.” The history is known—how it decreased, decreased, decreased.*

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Queen Kuntī had also prayed, “My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, Your Lordship can easily be approached, but only by those who are materially exhausted. One who is on the path of [material] progress, trying to improve himself with respectable parentage, great opulence, high education, and bodily beauty, cannot approach You with sincere feeling.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *So in 1950 I retired, practically. Not retired, but a little in touch with business—whatever is going on. Then almost it became nil. Whatever was there, all right. You do whatever you like.*

Abhay’s wife independently moved along with her sons back to her father’s house at 72 Mahatma Gandhi Road. She had reasoned that her financial support was becoming precarious.

Abhay was spending most of his time away from home. He was gradually disassociating himself from the family. When after several months he would meet his wife and children, his father-in-law would criticize him: “You are always going outside. You are always worshiping God. You are not looking after my family.” Whenever he could, Abhay would send his family some money.

Mr. Sudhir Kumar Dutta (Abhay’s nephew): *I sometimes noticed how he was thinking so many things—about his family, about his writings, about making bigger and bigger in business. “What to do, what to do?”*

He was thinking seriously to earn more money from his business. But that means he has to give more time for his business. And his writing he'd never give up. He was writing more and more, and people sometimes abused him: "Hey, you are writing religious things. You are only thinking of God? Then who will maintain your family? What will you do for the family?" Sometimes he argued with them: "What has this family given me? Why should I forget about God? This is the real thing, what I am doing. You cannot realize what I am doing."

On a visit to Calcutta, Abhay stayed at the home of his father-in-law, where he was given his own room. When his wife served him dinner, he noticed that everything had been purchased from the market. "How is this?" he asked.

"The cook is sick today," Radharani replied.

Abhay thought, "It is better that we not live here at the home of her father, or else she will be spoiled even more." So he moved his family to a new address on Chetla Street. Here he sometimes stayed with his family for a few months, writing articles and doing a minimal amount of business, but most of the time he stayed in Allahabad.

In Allahabad, Abhay, now fifty-four, lived like a *vānaprastha*, or one who has retired from family life. He was indifferent to the activities of family and business—activities a family man generally considers his prime objects of responsibility and happiness.

In his writings Abhay had several times discussed the four *āśramas*, or spiritual divisions of Vedic society: *brahmacārī*, *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha*, and *sannyāsa*. In the first division, the *brahmacārī āśrama*, a young boy's parents send him to the place of the *guru*, or *gurukula*, where he lives a simple life, studying the Vedic literature under the guidance of his *guru*. Thus in his childhood and youth he learns the principles of austerity and spiritual knowledge that form the basis for his entire life.

At age twenty-one the *brahmacārī* may take a wife and thus enter the next *āśrama*, the *gṛhastha āśrama*; or, like Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, he may choose to remain a lifelong *brahmacārī*. In his boyhood, Abhay had remained celibate and had imbibed the principles of devotion to Kṛṣṇa from his father and mother. Although he had lived at home, his upbringing had been the equivalent of *brahmacārī* life. And by marriage

at the age of twenty-one, he had entered the *gṛhastha āśrama* at the appropriate age. Gour Mohan's example had shown Abhay how to remain a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, even in family life. And as Vaiṣṇavas, Abhay and his wife had avoided the excesses of materialistic household life.

At fifty a man is supposed to retire from his family activities, and this stage is called *vānaprastha*. In the *vānaprastha āśrama*, both man and wife agree to abstain from further sexual contact; they may continue living together, but the emphasis is on spiritual partnership. As *vānaprasthas* they may travel together on pilgrimage to the holy places in India, preparing for their inevitable departure from the material world. Thus the Vedic *āśramas*, after allowing one to fulfill material life, enable one to end the cycle of repeated birth and death and attain the eternal spiritual world. A man of fifty should be able to see by his aging body that inevitable death is approaching, and he should have the good sense to prepare.

In the final division, the *sannyāsa āśrama*, the man places his wife in the care of a grown son and fully dedicates himself to serving the Supreme Lord. Formerly the *sannyāsa āśrama* meant a solitary life of penances in the Himalayas. But in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava line, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had emphasized preaching.

Although Abhay had not formally defined his status within the four *āśramas*, he appeared to be living more as a *vānaprastha* than a *gṛhastha*. He saw his business failures and his distasteful family situation as Kṛṣṇa's blessings, freeing him from family responsibilities and turning him wholeheartedly towards executing Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's order to preach.

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In Allahabad, Abhay managed to save enough money to revive the printing of *Back to Godhead*, and in February 1952, from his editorial office (and home) at 57B Canning Road, the first issue in eight years appeared. As before, he did everything himself—all the writing, typing, editing, meeting with the printer, and finally distributing the copies by hand as well as mailing them to respectable leaders throughout India. This, he felt, was the real purpose of living in Allahabad, or anywhere; this was the best use of money, the purpose of human life: to engage

fully in glorifying the Supreme Lord. Other things were temporary and would soon be lost.

When he visited his family in Calcutta, old friends would gather in his room, and he would preach and give classes on *Bhagavad-gītā*. Abhay invited his wife and family to take part in these discussions, but they would resolutely sit in an upstairs room, often taking tea, as if in defiance of his preaching. Abhay was supporting them, he was still associating with them, but he was bent on preaching, and they were not making it attractive for him to do so within the family. If there were to be family life for Abhay, then his wife and sons would have to recognize and rejoice in the fact that he was becoming a full-fledged preacher. They would have to understand that his life's concern was to serve his spiritual master's mission. They could not simply ignore his transformation. They could not insist that he was simply an ordinary man. Abhay continued to try to draw his wife in, hoping she would gradually follow him in the preacher's life. But she had not the slightest interest in her husband's preaching.

And why should he spend his days worrying about family, chemicals, and money? Let his relatives criticize, but *Back to Godhead* was the real service he could offer to the whole family of mankind. Mādhavendra Purī, a great spiritual preceptor and predecessor of Lord Caitanya, had written about the devotees' indifference to worldly criticism:

O demigods and forefathers, please excuse me. I am unable to perform any more offerings for your pleasure. Now I have decided to free myself from all reactions to sins simply by remembering anywhere and everywhere the great descendant of Yadu and the great enemy of Kāṁsa [Lord Kṛṣṇa]. I think that this is sufficient for me. So what is the use of further endeavors?

Let the sharp moralist accuse me of being illusioned; I do not mind. Experts in Vedic activities may slander me as being misled, friends and relatives may call me frustrated, my brothers may call me a fool, the wealthy mammonites may point me out as mad, and the learned philosophers may assert that I am much too proud; still my mind does not budge an inch from the determination to serve the lotus feet of Govinda, though I be unable to do it.

Why should he waste time with petty family problems when he held answers to the problems of India and the world? As a knower of

Bhagavad-gītā, he felt that his first obligation was to offer solutions to the complex crises of war, hunger, immorality, crime—all symptoms of godlessness. And if dedicating himself to such work meant that other, lesser responsibilities suffered, then there was no loss.

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In March 1952, Abhay published another issue of *Back to Godhead*. It was dedicated mostly to a biographical article Abhay had written about Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and his father, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura.

He [Bhaktivinode Thakur] vehemently protested against the principles of those pseudo-transcendentalists now passed in the name of Lord Chaitanya. He initiated the reformatory movement by literary contributions while he still engaged as a high Government Officer. During his householder life and serving as a Magistrate, he wrote books of various descriptions in Bengali, English, Sanskrit & etc. to present an actual picture of pure devotional activities to Lord Chaitanya. Sreela Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati Goswami Maharaj got inspiration from his very Childhood all about Sreela Thakur Bhaktivinode's movement. [He] worked as the private secretary of Sreela Bhaktivinode Thakur and as such Bhaktivinode Thakur gave Him (Sreela Saraswati Thakur) the transcendental Power of Attorney to espouse the cause of Lord Chaitanya. And so after Sreela Bhaktivinode Thakur's departure, Sreela Saraswati Thakur took up reins of that reformatory movement.

Absorbed in producing his monthly journal, Abhay went about his other activities only superficially. Sometimes he traveled on business or, taking the night train from Allahabad to Calcutta, visited his family. When his compartment was not crowded, he would turn on a light while others slept. Riding a night train provided a good opportunity to think or even write. Sometimes he would sleep for a few hours and then sit up again and look out the window to see only night and the reflected lights of the train compartment shining back at him, the windows reflecting his face.

Halfway through the twelve-hour journey, the sky would lighten, turning from gray to light blue, and the first white clouds would appear in the sky. He could see lights in the towns and hear the train horn warning. When the train slowed and stopped at a station, tea vendors would

walk alongside the train windows yelling, “*Chāy! Chāy! Chāy!*” their loud singsong din filling the ears with “*Chāy!*” and *chāy* filling the air with its aroma, as hundreds of passengers sipped their morning tea.

During his more than twenty years of extensive train travel, Abhay had noticed more and more people smoking cigarettes and more and more women traveling alone. India was becoming Westernized. And the national leaders were paving the way—the blind leading the blind. They wanted the kingdom of God without God. They wanted a progressive, industrialized India, without Kṛṣṇa. From the windows he could see large fields being left uncultivated, and yet people were hungry.

Abhay would sometimes read a newspaper and cut out an article that seemed to warrant a reply in *Back to Godhead* or that sparked an idea for an essay. He would deliberate over how to approach people for assistance, whom to approach, and how to start a society of Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees. People not only in India but all over the world could take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The *Caitanya-bhāgavata* had predicted that the name of Lord Caitanya would one day be known in every town and village. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had wanted that. He had sent preachers to England, but they had only gained a protocol visit with the royalty, stood in line, bowed before the Crown, and then come back to India without effecting any change in the Western people. Abhay thought about sending *Back to Godhead* abroad. His agents, Thacker, Spink and Company, had contacts in America and Europe. People read English all over the world, and some of them would surely appreciate the ideas from *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. This was what Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had wanted. Kṛṣṇa consciousness was not for India alone. It was India's greatest gift, and it was for everyone.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Jhansi: The League of Devotees

“Wanted—candidates from any nationality to qualify themselves as real Brahmins for preaching the teachings of Bhagwat Geeta for all practical purposes throughout the whole world. Deserving candidates will be provided with free boarding and lodging. Apply: A. C. Bhaktivedanta, Founder and Secretary of the League of Devotees, Bharati Bhawan, P.O. Jhansi (U.P.)”

—Abhay Charan De

It was another twelve-hour ride with dozens of stops. The train's rattling and clattering and its rocking from side to side made writing difficult, but Abhay, crowded on the wooden bench with other third-class passengers, kept writing. Within the dingy compartment, passengers eyed one another complacently, and soot and dust blew in the open windows as the train sped along. Outside, past the monotonous embankment of loose stones, bright violet trumpet flowers bloomed on tall stalks in the shallow trackside ditches. Water buffalo and oxen grazed in the distance or sometimes pulled a plow before a solitary farmer.

Abhay was going to Jhansi—not for business, but for preaching. One month before, in October of 1952, when Abhay had visited Jhansi on

business, Mr. Dubey, a customer and the owner of a Jhansi hospital, had invited him to lecture at the Gita Mandir. Many Jhansi people appreciated things religious or humanitarian, whether from Vaiṣṇavas, theosophists, Māyāvādīs, politicians, or whatever. They regarded almost any path as “*dharma*” as long as it showed some edifying piety or tended towards the public welfare. Mr. Dubey had read with interest several issues of *Back to Godhead* and had therefore requested Abhay to speak. Abhay had been eager. And he had found keen interest amongst the audience of more than a hundred people, many of them young medical students and graduates from the local Ayurvedic college.

Abhay was fifty-six, and his commanding presentation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness had impressed the young, religious-minded people of Jhansi. Twenty-five-year-old Prabhākar Misra, principal of the Vedanta Sanskrit College and head medical officer of the Jhansi Ayurvedic University, saw that Abhay was very forceful in his desire to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Dr. Misra regarded him as a kind of *guru*, although dressed in white. “Here is a humble person,” he thought, “a real *sādhū*.”

Short and stocky Dr. Sastri, just beginning his career in Ayurvedic medicine, was an active young man, fascinated by Abhay’s purity and his vision of a world movement for distributing India’s culture. Older men, like tall, suave Ramcharan Hayharan Mitra, a utensils shopkeeper who wrote poetry and wore a white Nehru cap, also wanted to learn more about Lord Caitanya from Abhay. Dr. Mullik, who was the Gita Mandir secretary, and Dr. Siddhi from the university, along with their wives, had sincerely approached Abhay after his talk and asked him please to visit Jhansi again.

Abhay had come to them not as a pharmaceutical salesman or as a man with family concerns, but purely as a devotee of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Although the specific applications of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as given by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī were new to his audience, these teachings had interested them, and the more Abhay had expressed these teachings and spoken of his ambitions for spreading Kṛṣṇa’s message, the more his hearers had encouraged him. Several of them had suggested he conduct his mission in Jhansi, and they had promised to help him. Dr. Sastri had even invited Abhay to come live with him; he would introduce Abhay to important citizens and arrange for lectures in the various meeting places of Jhansi.

After staying for ten days, Abhay had returned to Allahabad, but

remembering Jhansi he had been unable to concentrate on his business. Something more important was on his mind: the need for an association of devotees propagating the teachings and practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness worldwide. With the Gaudiya Math now broken into permanent schisms—his Godbrothers conducting their own private *āśramas* in separate locales, apparently impervious to any reconciliations—something would have to be done if the overwhelming atmosphere of godlessness were to be corrected. There must emerge, as Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had envisioned, a league of preachers with activities worldwide.

The nations of the world had sought unity through the League of Nations, and recently through the United Nations. The League had failed, and so would the United Nations, unless it recognized the true, spiritual unity and equality of all living beings in terms of their intimate relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Abhay did not expect any good to come of such organizations; though they wanted peace and unity, their attempts were simply another feature of godlessness. No, creating peace and unity was the duty of Vaiṣṇavas.

So Abhay had been thinking that perhaps a likely place to start an organization of devotees would be Jhansi. It wasn't a major city, but at least he had found concerned people. The students had listened and accepted and had said they would help. Abhay had sensed a certain lack of sincerity and depth in their appreciation and a sentimentality that made him doubt their seriousness—but if he could find a few or even one who was serious, then he would have a beginning. He wanted to preach—that was his mission. Besides, he was already getting older; if something were to begin, it should be now. So he would go to Jhansi again, to stay for an indefinite duration. Without much concern for his Allahabad affairs, Abhay left his pharmaceutical business with his son and nephew, informing them that he was going to Jhansi.

As the train pulled into the station, Abhay saw Dr. Sastri waving energetically. They rode together by *ṭāngā* to Dr. Sastri's dispensary, and the talkative, effusive doctor promised many preaching opportunities and interviews. Dr. Sastri also spoke of the lore of Jhansi: The site of the present city had formerly been a part of the forest in which Lord Rāmacandra had practiced austerities many thousands of years ago. The Pāṇ-davas had lived here during their exile, and since then many great Vedic

sages had had their hermitages in the area. Jhansi had also been the home of an Indian heroine, Lakshmi Bhai, who in the mid-nineteenth century had taken part in starting the Indian independence movement against the British regime. Statues and pictures of Lakshmi Bhai riding a horse and holding a sword in her upraised hand were displayed throughout the town. But the Jhansi of 1952 was a crowded, poor city with dirt streets and minimal technological amenities.

Dr. Sastri lived alone in a two-story rented building in Jhansi's Sipri Bazaar. On the first floor he had his clinic and upstairs his one-room residence, which he had offered to share with Abhay. The young but influential doctor was a good person to introduce Abhay to receptive citizens of Jhansi, and he was eager to do so. Outgoing and energetic, he moved easily amongst the people of his town. He was respectful towards Abhay, who was twice his age and whom he appreciated as being firmly fixed in the Vaiṣṇava philosophy and way of life. Dr. Sastri saw it as his duty to help Abhay, and he gladly introduced Abhay to others and arranged for lectures.

Abhay and Dr. Sastri would cook and eat together like family members. Abhay revealed his idea for a "League of Devotees," an organization with worldwide scope but based in Jhansi. The citizens of Jhansi, he said, should all take part in helping spread Lord Kṛṣṇa's mission. Lord Caitanya had said that Indians have a special responsibility to distribute God consciousness, both in India and around the world.

Dr. Sastri: *In his heart, always it was burning that the whole world was suffering in the materialistic view—everyone is busy in eat, drink, and be merry. So the whole day he was touring and preaching his mission that was prescribed by Caitanya Mahāprabhu and his Guru Mahārāja. He was having iron-will determination and self-confidence about his mission. He was not doubtful at all. He was dṛḍha-vrata [staunchly determined]. Actually, he was always preaching: harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam/ kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatiḥ anyathā—no other way except Hare Kṛṣṇa nāma. So, always discussing, sometimes the whole night he was discussing with me, and sometimes I was fed up. I was requesting, "Please don't disturb me. Please let me sleep." And he—the old man missionary worker—he was just like a young man. I was a young chap, and he was just like my friend, my elder*

brother. He was like my guide and teacher—because the preacher is a friend, philosopher, and guide.

He was always trying to create a good atmosphere through Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and Bhagavad-gītā. The whole Bhagavad-gītā was his practical life. His mission was not a mission of preaching only, but of practical action. He was also trying to catch me for this mission, and I would try to slip away. I did not think that he would do any miracle for spiritual revolution of the world, although that is what he urged us.

While Dr. Sastri tended his clinic, Abhay sat and spoke with patients, occasionally recommending medicines but mostly preaching. For now he was content to live and preach in Jhansi. Here was life—people receptive to his preaching, who responded to his urging them to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. His desire and determination to leave everything else behind and preach day and night, depending on Kṛṣṇa for the result, were increasing.

He began regularly lecturing and chanting at various programs in the city, sometimes at several in one day. On Sundays he would lecture at the Sadhana Mandir, another day at the Gita Mandir, another day at the Theosophical Society, and regularly in people's homes.

Mr. Ram Mitra, the shopkeeper-poet, maintained a Śiva temple near his home, and Abhay began to perform *kīrtana* and lecture there. Sometimes Mr. Mitra would speak in Hindi on *Bhagavad-gītā* at the Sadhana Mandir, and Abhay would attend. Sometimes Abhay would visit Mr. Mitra at his utensils shop. The shop was in a crowded Jhansi bazaar and opened onto the busy street. Abhay would sit down like an ordinary customer, amidst stacks of stainless-steel buckets, plates, bowls, and *lotās*, and speak to Mr. Mitra and friends about *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Or sometimes he would listen to Mr. Mitra tell about his published book of poetry and his literary reputation.

Mr. Mitra saw that Abhay's ambition was no less than to make the whole city of Jhansi alive with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Abhay quoted *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*: "One who has received the great fortune of taking birth in India should make his life perfect and then do good for others by spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness." "And," Abhay would add, "the whole world is waiting, Mr. Mitra, for our spiritual revolution." Mr. Mitra would nod, his handsome Nehru-like face forming a smile. But he saw that Abhay wanted people to do more than merely listen to him—he wanted them to *do* something.

Once Mr. Mitra offered Abhay a copy of his book, showing him the

foreword by a famous man, and repeatedly mentioned that the great *sādhū* Vinoba Bhave had liked the poems very much. When Mr. Mitra learned that Abhay was a regular milk drinker, he began offering Abhay fresh milk daily from his cow, a black cow (and black cows, Mr. Mitra said, gave especially good milk). Abhay invited Mr. Mitra to accompany him on foot to nearby villages along with a *kīrtana* party for preaching. But Mr. Mitra declined, being unable to get anyone to tend the shop for him.

Another young Ayurvedic doctor was Dr. Siddhi, who immediately expressed interest in Abhay's enthusiastic plans for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Dr. Siddhi: *He came several times to my place. I've got a kīrtana room on my roof, and he performed kīrtana there as well as at the Gita Mandir. We were also going daily to the Theosophical Society. There was an atmosphere, a very pious, sacred, and calm atmosphere, when the kīrtana and preaching and lectures were performed. He used to play harmonium. We accompanied him for meeting people and preaching his mission. The main thing was to perform kīrtana and give a lecture on the Bhagavad-gītā and the life of Kṛṣṇa. Caitanya Mahāprabhu was his Lord, and I also loved Him.*

Radhelal Mullik, secretary of the Gita Mandir and Sadhana Mandir, began meeting often with Abhay.

Radhelal Mullik: *I was very much influenced by him. I used to spend three or four hours every morning in his association. He had many, many big scriptures. He was mainly concerned about the books about Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He was also writing at that time. The president of the Gita Mandir and I both volunteered to cook for him.*

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It was during a morning walk with Radhelal Mullik that Abhay first spotted the Bharati Bhavan, a picturesque temple complex across from the large Antiya pond. The neighborhood, known as Antiya Tal, was quiet and sparsely populated, but it was near Sipri Road, the main thoroughfare between downtown Jhansi and Sipri Bazaar. Abhay inquired from Mr. Mullik about the temple, and together they turned from the main road and walked down a sloping footpath that led through the main gates of the compound.

There they found several secluded acres, nestled within a grove of *nīm* and mango trees. The main structure was the Radha Memorial. It was small like a chapel, but its proportions were stout and bold. Sitting on an octagonal stone base, it rose on eight ornate pillars of red and white chipped marble, to a stone dome on top. Two elephants, bearing the goddess of fortune, Lakṣmī, on their upraised trunks, decorated the entrance. Concrete bunting and striped patterns of red, green, and blue added to the decorative yet massive effect. The entrance was marked with the words Rādhā-smarak carved in Hindi script, and above it the English translation: Radha Memorial.

When Abhay saw the Sanskrit inscription across the side of the stone temple—Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—he turned to Radhelal Mullik and said strongly, “The Lord has built this building for my use.” From that moment, Abhay was determined to have the building.

Mr. Mullik explained that the temple had been built in 1939 as a memorial to the wealthy Vaiṣṇava landowner Radha Bhai but at the present was not in use. Dr. Prabhākar Misra, whom Abhay had already met on several occasions, was occupying some of the rooms, but otherwise it was deserted. Mr. Mullik and Abhay sought Dr. Misra in his quarters in the main building, and when Dr. Misra saw Abhay’s enthusiasm, he invited Abhay to stay there with him. Dr. Misra confirmed that except for his Sunday-morning *Gītā* class the facility was sitting idle, and he welcomed Abhay to carry on his writing and preaching there.

Abhay liked the idea. Immediately he began thinking of uses for the buildings, surveying the land with increasing interest. A second, larger building, also with stone pillars and facades, held a hall and five rooms. Abhay made mental plans for each room: in this room, *kīrtanas* and lectures with large gatherings; in this room, the Deity of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu; in these rooms, resident *brahmacārīs* and *sannyāsīs*; guests here; an office there; the printing press here. There was even land for grazing a cow. It was a self-contained unit. Hundreds of people could come here for *kīrtana*, *prasādam*, and discourses. Preachers could go out from here distributing *Back to Godhead* magazines; some could even go abroad with Lord Caitanya’s message.

As Abhay and his companions walked through the compound, appreciating it as a suitable place to start an *āśrama*, his companions encouraged him, saying they were sure that Mr. Reva Sankar Bhayal, the

agent who handled all the properties of Radha Bhai's descendants, would have no objection to Abhay's living there. Why couldn't the landlord give him the buildings? Abhay asked. They were simply going to waste. If it were actually to be a memorial to Rādhā, it should be used in Kṛṣṇa's service, since Kṛṣṇa is Rādhā's worshipable Lord.

Abhay was determined, and his friends agreed to help him. First they met with Ram Mitra, who said that he was such a close friend of Mr. Bhayal's that Mr. Bhayal would probably give the place simply at his request. Dr. Sastri said that he also wanted to go to impress upon Mr. Bhayal how much the people of Jhansi wanted Abhay to have this place.

When Reva Sankar Bhayal met with his friend Ram Mitra, also present were Abhay, Dr. Sastri, Radhelal Mullik, Prabhākar Misra, and Suryamukhi Sharma, a young, educated Jhansi woman. They presented the case from several angles, and Mr. Bhayal listened. He agreed that he wasn't using the place at present and this seemed to be a good cause. He agreed to let Abhay use the facilities for his League of Devotees for as long as he liked. And, at Abhay's request, he agreed to become a member of the League. They shook hands. On behalf of the estate, Mr. Bhayal presented the Bharati Bhavan properties in charity to Abhay Charan De and the League of Devotees.

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During December and January, Abhay prepared a League of Devotees charter. He wanted to begin vigorous, extensive preaching, following the example of his spiritual master. Once he began to set his goals to paper, the project immediately began to expand—beyond Jhansi, beyond India. Of course, the League of Devotees was for the young people of Jhansi—they were already expressing great interest—but Abhay's charter described more than merely evening classes and *kīrtana*. It was a broad scheme, including a description of the four orders of society (*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, and *śūdra*) and detailed plans to accommodate a worldwide religious movement. The charter set forth a probationary period for prospective members, it described spiritual initiation, it arranged for economic reciprocation between individual members and the League, it arranged to provide lodgings for preachers, and it defined prohibited activities: "illegitimate connection with women, intoxicating habit, diets

[other than] regulated strictly on vegetable kingdom, gambling, [and] unnecessary sporting or recreation enterprises."

To establish his League with the registrar in Lucknow, Abhay required a "Memorandum of Association" signed by the League members. In this document, which was to list the objectives of the society, Abhay expressed his vision for the continuation of his spiritual master's mission. Like his Godbrothers who had created new *mathas* after the dissolution of the Gaudiya Math, Abhay was forming a new branch of the Gaudiya *sampradāya*, to be called the "League of Devotees." He was not simply claiming proprietorship of a few buildings; he was establishing a Kṛṣṇa conscious society that would expand into a world movement. His intentions were clearly not insular, but were directed towards creating "centres for spiritual development all over the world. . . ." Abhay wrote: "... Lord Chaitanya . . . revealed the transcendental process of approaching the ABSOLUTE GODHEAD, and in [His] teachings nothing appears to be absurd from the point of human reasoning and nothing against any religion as accepted by the human and civilised world." In enumerating the League's goals, he included the opening of centers in all parts of the world, thus establishing the League as "an International Organisation for spiritual developments through education, culture as also by recruiting members from all nations, creeds and castes." The League would publish literature in many languages and print a monthly magazine, *Back to Godhead*.

Abhay obtained the necessary signatures for his Memorandum of Association. He then took the train to Lucknow and, on February 4, paid the deposit of fifty rupees and filed his application. He returned to Jhansi.

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In his room in the Radha Memorial, Abhay would rise daily at 4:00 A.M. and arouse his young neighbor, Prabhākar Misra. From four to five Abhay would write, at five he would walk in the Antiya Tal area, at five-thirty bathe, and then chant Hare Kṛṣṇa on his beads until seven, when he would hold a class on the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (although Prabhākar Misra was usually the only listener). At eight he would return to his literary work, typing until after ten,

when he would begin to prepare a meal. In the afternoon he would often go around Jhansi, meeting people and preaching, looking for anyone willing to take part in the League of Devotees. In the early evening he would write until seven, when he would prepare for the *kīrtana* and lecture he would hold at one of various places in the city, depending on where he was invited.

Although Abhay had no money for continuing *Back to Godhead*, a well-established part of his preaching was to write essays, regardless of whether they were to be immediately published or not. He wrote a long essay, some twenty-four thousand words, entitled "Message of Godhead." He also wrote a series of chapters propounding the teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā*, especially as they applied to world problems, and *Science of Devotion*, a summary study of Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*.

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On May 16, 1953, Abhay held a grand-opening celebration for the League of Devotees, with continuous readings, *kīrtana*, and *prasādam* distribution from early morning until night. The buildings were decorated with leaves, flowers, and many earthen waterpots. In the evening, when attendance was the greatest, Abhay lectured from the Ninth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā* on "*Rāja-guhya Yoga*." Prabhākar Misra conducted a fire sacrifice, and several *brāhmaṇas* chanted *mantras* from *Brahma-saṁhitā*. Guests received a sixteen-page prospectus containing Abhay's essay on the need for the League and an excerpt from the charter explaining its goals. It was signed, "OM . . . TAT . . . SAT, Abhay Charanaravindo Bhaktivedanta, Founder and Secretary."

The opening was a pleasant, auspicious event for the people of Jhansi, and hundreds gathered in the evening for Abhay's lecture. Dr. Sharma, a charter member of the League and editor of the Jhansi daily newspaper, had already publicized the event and was planning a write-up for the following day. The *Gauḍīya Patrikā* also reported on the opening.

The editor of the local Theosophical Society, Sri Lakshminarayan Rajapali, was also present; although he holds different philosophical opinions from Bhaktivedanta Prabhu, he is very sympathetic with this movement. In the assembly there were many people worth mentioning. . . . The inaugura-

tion and establishing of Deities will be done soon. The assembly will request Rajapati Sri K. M. Munshi to perform the inauguration ceremony. . . . Their center has been registered by the Societies Registration Act. Sri Bharati Bhavan is the name of the League's building, in which they have a lecture hall and a temple that resembles a palace. The assembly has many activities at the center, and there are also facilities for members to live there.

Abhay felt confident that the Bharati Bhavan would now be established and recognized as the home of the League of Devotees. He was happy to see that the opening day was not merely his private affair but an event celebrated by the most important citizens of Jhansi.

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His past life was seeming further and further behind him each day. But one day after he had been in Jhansi about six months, a telegram arrived, bringing a startling reminder of his past connections. His business in Allahabad had been burglarized. His servants had stolen all his money and medicine and anything else of value. It had been a loss of seven thousand rupees. Abhay read the news, laughed, and uttered the *Bhāgavatam* verse

*yasyāham anugrṇāmi
hariṣye tad-dhanam śanaiḥ
tato 'dhanam tyajanty asya
sva-janā duḥkha-duḥkhitam*

Prabhākar Misra advised Abhay to go back to Allahabad to recover what he could. "No," Abhay said, "this is good for me. I was sad, but now one great attachment has come to an end, and my life is fully surrendered and dedicated to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava."

Abhay's son Brindaban soon arrived in Jhansi, requesting Abhay to come to Calcutta to revive the business, Abhay Charan De and Sons. As they sat together in Abhay's room at the Radha Memorial, Abhay explained that he could not go back. He requested Brindaban to stay and assist him by doing typewriting. But Brindaban returned to Calcutta.

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From his first meeting with Prabhākar, Abhay had urged the younger, educated man to take part in the League of Devotees as a full-time assistant. Although as lecturer and medical officer Prabhākar had many duties at the university, he helped as much as he felt he could; he soon became Abhay's most active assistant. Abhay appointed him secretary to the League and, after several months, initiated him. Thus Abhay became Prabhākar's spiritual master, and Prabhākar became Abhay's first disciple. As a preacher, Abhay was duty-bound to accept disciples, giving them the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and the *paramparā* instructions as he had received them from his spiritual master. Prabhākar, however, not being a completely surrendered disciple, remained independent, more like an assistant than a disciple. As university principal, Sanskrit scholar, and medical doctor, he continued to pursue his own interests also.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *That League of Devotees—I was alone. There were some students, but they were not so active. I was doing everything. I wanted to organize with Prabhākar Misra and others, but they were not interested to devote their whole time. If you asked him to do full-time work, that he'd not do. But he was initiated. They were all learned scholars in Sanskrit—medical men.*

Thus when the *Gauḍīya Patrikā* had reported the opening-day ceremonies, it had referred to Prabhākar in honorable terms, as Abhay's partner in the League of Devotees, although he was actually Śrīla Bhaktivedanta's initiated disciple.

Bhaktivedanta Prabhu summoned the service of the Honourable Ācārya Śrīmad Prabhākar Misra Śāstrī, *kāvya*- (poetry), *vyākaraṇa*- (grammar), *vedānta*- (philosophy) *tīrtha*, BIS MSA—to perform the sacrifice. He is the principal of a college in which the *Vedas* and the *Vedāṅgas* are taught and degrees are given. He is also the Assistant Manager of the League of Devotees.

According to time and circumstances, Abhay was engaging this young man in devotional service. Abhay was interested not in collecting disciples but in establishing the League of Devotees. And for that he needed assistants.

Prabhākar Misra: *When I first met Swamiji, he said to me, "You're a brāhmaṇa and a prabhākar, and you are eating in a restaurant? You*

come with me—I will feed you myself, and I shall cook.” So we would prepare prasādam, and offering it to the Lord, we would take bhagavat-prasādam together. In this way, by his mercy, I got the chance to take prasādam. He also said to me, “You become keśa-hīn [shaven].” So I went with shaven head to the college where I taught, and everyone laughed at me. When I told Swamiji the situation, he said, “Since you are a medical officer, you can grow out your hair.”

When I took dīkṣā, Swamiji gave me my name, Ācārya Prabhākar. My original name was Prabhākar Misra, so he said, “You don’t write the Misra. You are Ācārya Prabhākar.” He gave me the name and offered me a tulasī-mālā and put tilaka on my forehead and tied a kaṇṭhi-mālā around my neck. He had registered the foundation of the League of Devotees, and he appointed me as its secretary for preaching throughout the world. We used to go to the villages for saṅkīrtana and Bhagavad-gītā kathā continuously.

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Abhay started a saṅkīrtana movement in Jhansi. At first, accompanied only by Ācārya Prabhākar, he used to walk about the neighborhood of Naybhasti, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. As he continued this practice, his group gradually increased until fifty people were gathering regularly to go out on parikrama, chant together, and visit temples. Afterwards, they would gather at the Radha Memorial for an evening lecture.

When Abhay would go to preach in the nearby villages, he would usually be accompanied by whatever League members were free. Once he went with Ācārya Prabhākar on pāda-yātrā (traveling on foot and preaching) to Chirgoan, some twenty miles from Jhansi. In Chirgoan there lived a nationally known poet, Maithili Saran Gupta, who received Abhay and his disciple at his home for dinner. Abhay told his host that since he was an accomplished poet, he should write something glorifying Kṛṣṇa, and the poet agreed. After preaching in Chirgoan, Abhay and Prabhākar returned to Jhansi, spending one day in each of five villages along the way. At night the villagers would gather, and Abhay would lead kīrtana. He explained to Prabhākar that although most of these simple farmers were not scholars in Bhagavad-gītā or Bhāgavatam, they could achieve the highest spiritual benefit simply by kīrtana. Abhay was

well received by the villagers, who begged him to return soon but to give them notice next time so that they could prepare a proper reception.

While preaching locally, Abhay was simultaneously working to give an international scope to his League of Devotees. He wrote to government agencies, asking them to help him expand his genuine educational project, and he also tried to recruit preachers from amongst his friends. He wrote to his old college classmate Rupen Mitra in Calcutta, inviting him to join in worldwide missionary activities.

My mission desires to train up 40 trainees . . . and I have asked help from the Government for this useful educational purpose. I want that you may be one of the trainees in this regard and you can ask Kartikdada to join us in this spirit. You will know from the papers sent to you how we live and what we do and thus you can make up your mind whether it is possible for you to join us. The first thing is that we want to train up some retired men in the Vanaprastha life and some young men in the Brahmacharya life. I have no inclination for the Sannyas life, which is rather a difficult job for the fallen people of this age. The so-called sannyasis in red garments have spoiled the good name of such order of life. [*Abhay also asked Rupen,*] Kindly let me know the charges of this advertisement in the English and vernacular papers of Calcutta.

EDUCATIONAL

“Wanted—candidates from any nationality to qualify themselves as real Brahmins for preaching the teachings of Bhagwat Geeta for all practical purposes throughout the whole world. Deserving candidates will be provided with free boarding and lodging. Apply: A. C. Bhaktivedanta, Founder and Secretary of the League of Devotees, Bharati Bhawan, P.O. Jhansi (U.P.)”

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Abhay wanted a deed stating that the Bharati Bhavan belonged to the League of Devotees. So far he had only a promise. Thinking of Jhansi as a permanent headquarters, he wanted a written commitment. When he approached Reva Sankar Bhayal for “a deed of gift,” Mr. Bhayal gave Abhay a form requesting him to pay five hundred rupees to register the buildings. But since Abhay had just suffered a loss of seven thousand rupees in Allahabad and had recently spent three thousand rupees in his

preaching (much of it going towards the opening-day festival), he found himself unable to raise even five hundred rupees. Ācārya Prabhākar, despite his academic position, had very little money and was being subsidized by his parents with three rupees a day. Most of Abhay's congregation, especially the students, were in a similar position. Mr. Bhayal's request for five hundred rupees didn't seem urgent, nor did he say what would happen if Abhay couldn't pay. But he soon made another request: Mr. Abhay Charan De should buy the Bharati Bhavan for five thousand rupees.

It was disconcerting; the generous gift had turned into a purchase offer. The people in town were already referring to the property as Abhay Bhaktivedanta's *āśrama*, and "The League of Devotees" was printed in large letters across the wall of the compound. When pressed by Abhay's friends, Mr. Bhayal assured them that Abhay could go on living there. But ultimately he would have to buy. Mr. Bhayal said he would give the League of Devotees first consideration and a good price.

Abhay worried, not knowing what the landlord would do next. If the League could purchase the property, that would be best. But he had been unable to raise even five hundred rupees; five thousand seemed impossible. Abhay found no strong financial backing from his congregation; his League did not include even a single full-time worker.

He did know of one way to raise money: his pharmaceutical business. He still had a small operation being run by his son in Calcutta. Abhay had formerly been earning three thousand rupees a month. He considered approaching Godbrothers for help, but the prospects for earning the money himself seemed more likely. For thirty years he had earned money by his pharmaceutical business, and he could do it again—for the most worthy cause.

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When he arrived in Calcutta in the spring of 1954 he was without money. He chose to live with his Godbrothers at the Gaudiya Saṅgha in Chetla, the same neighborhood his family lived in. Since he had no money, the head of the *āśrama* bore his expenses. Abhay gave daily discourses on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which the Gaudiya Saṅgha *brahmacārīs* highly appreciated.

Kṛṣṇa Kumāra Brahmācārī: *Even after he left, his sweet, melodious*

voice would ring in my ears. He used to often express a desire to go abroad and preach.

One of his sons was running a small business, Vimaltone Laboratory, and thus supporting the family. Abhay knew that his wife would not be interested in his work in Jhansi; his son had been there but had not been impressed. The family would see his preaching in Jhansi as a threat to their home life. Abhay, however, was sustaining himself by his vision—which was now taking practical shape—of a world reformed by Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He even thought of opening a branch of the League of Devotees in Calcutta.

But inevitably he was plunged again into family responsibilities: some of his children were still unmarried, rent and bills had to be paid. Even if he were to develop the Vimaltone Laboratory, the family would demand whatever he earned, and even if he were to accede to their demands, live at home, and give up preaching, the greatest difficulty would still remain: they weren't serious about devotional service. Nor could he change them. What was the use of conducting a business if they would not be devotees?

He visited his family, and the same, old scene occurred. Local friends came to visit, and Abhay began preaching, giving *Bhagavad-gītā* classes just as he had been doing in Jhansi. Meanwhile, his wife and the rest of the family would take tea in a separate room.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *I wanted as much as possible to get her to work with me in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, to get her help. But she was very determined. She wouldn't help me in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So finally, after many years, I could understand—she would not be any assistance to me.*

She was very attached to drinking tea. I was always telling her not to drink tea, because I wanted to have a nice Vaiṣṇava family. So although I was repeatedly telling her, this time I finally said, "You have to choose between me or tea. Either the tea goes or I go." In this way, I was even criticizing my own family. But because they were thinking I was the husband or father, they couldn't take my instruction seriously. So she replied, "Give up tea-drinking or give up my husband? Well, I will have to give up my husband, then." Of course, she thought I was joking.

One day, Radharani made a great mistake. There was a system of barter in which a customer would place on a scale an object a shopkeeper

considered valuable and the shopkeeper would then balance it with an equal weight of merchandise. So while Abhay was out, his wife took his worshipable *Bhāgavatam* to the market and traded it for tea biscuits. When Abhay came home and looked for the book, she told him what had happened. She hadn't taken the matter as a very serious thing—she was out of tea biscuits—but Abhay was shocked. At first he felt depressed, but then a wave of absolute resolution passed over him: his family life was finished.

When he told them he was leaving, they didn't understand what he meant. He had been leaving for thirty years. He was always coming and going. When he walked out the door, they thought, "There he goes again. He's leaving." It was the usual routine. Everyone could see, even the neighbors—Mr. De was going again. He had been at home; now he was going. He would be back again. But Abhay knew he would never come back.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *Before leaving my family, I wanted to get all my sons and daughters married, but some of them disagreed. But then . . . the time is up. Never mind whether they are married or not. Let them see to their own business. Suppose I die immediately—who will take care of my daughter? At that time we say, "God will take care." Then why not now? God will take care. My Guru Mahārāja used to say [that renunciation of family life was] "civil suicide." If you commit suicide, that is criminal. But that [renunciation of family] is voluntarily committing suicide—"Now I am dead. Whatever you like, you do."*

Kṛṣṇa says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya—give up all religion. So family is gr̥ha-dharma, the religion of the family. But Kṛṣṇa says give that up. But that attachment is there. And if we say that feeling of attachment has to be given up gradually, then that we cannot do, because the attachment is there. But if God will take care of them if I die immediately, then why not now?*

His spiritual emotions were so turbulent that he wasn't thinking of going to Jhansi. He wanted to take a train to . . . anywhere. Then he remembered some old Godbrother friends who were living in an āśrama in Jhargram, only a short train ride south of Calcutta. So he borrowed ten rupees from a friend and bought a ticket to Jhargram.

It was a small maṭha. When Abhay arrived, he was welcomed by Paramahansa Mahārāja, Dāmodara Mahārāja, and others. Paramahansa

Mahārāja had been present when Abhay had first met Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and he remembered Abhay as he had looked then, dressed in white *khādī*, looking like a Gandhian “anarchist.” Abhay explained to him, “I couldn’t fulfill my family’s needs. So now let me preach the message of Lord Caitanya.” Abhay told him how his business had failed and how he had willingly left his family and was now destitute.

Paramahansa Mahārāja: *When Abhay arrived he appeared very poor, starving. He had no means. He came alone to the maṭha, and when he arrived he only chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa, nothing else.*

Abhay spent his time in Jhargram chanting the holy name and becoming settled in detachment from his family. For several days he chanted *japa* almost continuously. Paramahansa Mahārāja would lecture in the evenings, and then Abhay would also speak on *Bhagavad-gītā*. But as time passed, his thoughts turned again to Jhansi, and he soon felt ready to go back to the League of Devotees. He had to secure the buildings and go on with the preaching.

But before returning he obtained a large Deity of Lord Caitanya that he planned to install at the Bharati Bhavan. Ironically, he had gone to Calcutta to do business and raise money, but now he had no money, no business, and no family responsibilities. He had been married thirty-six years, and now, at age fifty-eight, he had fully taken to the *vānaprastha* order. Now he could dedicate his life fully to preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

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Abhay did not adopt the saffron dress of a *vānaprastha*, but continued wearing a white *dhotī* and *kurtā*. The people of Jhansi had always known him as a preacher with no family, ever since he had first arrived, a year and a half before. Now he was returning to them with a Deity of Lord Caitanya and a determination to establish Lord Caitanya’s temple in Jhansi. Abhay met with a warm welcome from Ācārya Prabhākar and others. But he also met with competition for possession of the Radha Memorial.

It began with a Sanskrit conference, the Bandelkand Sanskrit Sammelan, which brought to Jhansi the governor of the province, K. M. Munshi, and his wife, Lilavati. An active social organizer, Lilavati

Munshi had opened several branches of the Mahila Samity Sangha, a society that aimed at socially uplifting women by teaching them secretarial skills and English. Two educated Jhansi ladies, Candramukhi and Suryamukhi, wanted such a women's social program for Jhansi, and they took the opportunity to approach Lilavati Munshi during her visit. She inspired them, and they began to talk about where in Jhansi they could open one of her social centers. Perhaps, suggested one of the ladies, the Bharati Bhavan could be used. Although Suryamukhi Sharma had been one of the sympathizers who had first approached Mr. Bhayal on behalf of Abhay Charan De and had asked that he be given the Bharati Bhavan for his League of Devotees, she felt that the ladies' cause was more important—and she knew that Abhay's ownership of the buildings was not settled. The women agreed that the buildings would be an excellent facility for a Mahila Samity Sangha branch and that their cause was more urgent than Abhay Charan's.

Suryamukhi, assured of support by the governor's wife, called on A. C. Bhaktivedanta. She explained that his league of worldwide Vaiṣṇavas would never take shape. He was a nice person, and she liked him, but she didn't think he could realize his extraordinary expectations. She suggested he vacate the Bharati Bhavan so that the governor's wife could organize a women's social center. "You can go here and there for the sake of building a temple," she told him. "You are free to travel anywhere. But these poor women in Jhansi have nothing, so they must be given these buildings for their use." She found him adamantly opposed.

"No," Abhay said, "find another building." Abhay argued that his work was not just for a section of people, but for all living beings. Suryamukhi left frustrated. Abhay was surprised that a member of the League of Devotees was now working against him. And the maneuver was being backed by the governor's wife!

Mrs. Munshi could work at a much more influential level, without having to confront Abhay directly and without his even knowing what she was doing. After she talked with Mr. Bhayal, word got around that Mr. Bhayal had been pressured to persuade Abhay Charan to relinquish his claim on the Bharati Bhavan. Mr. Bhayal owned a cinema house in Jhansi, and there was talk that he could have a lot of difficulty with his operator's license unless Abhay Charan vacated the Radha Memorial.

In December 1954 Mrs. Munshi wrote Abhay in reference to his

failure to raise the five thousand rupees. "Dear Bhaktivedantaji," she wrote, "You wanted to organize there, but you could not. But I have got this institution, Mahila Samity. Why not give it to me?" Abhay was of a mind to resist. He had lawyer friends who advised him that even though he was opposed by the governor's family, he had a good case that would stand up well in court; India's tradition of respect for religious buildings was on his side.

Abhay replied to Mrs. Munshi, introducing himself as the founder of the League of Devotees. He explained the goal of the League, enclosed a copy of his prospectus, and presented many statements by prominent people—Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Sri Sitaram, Raja Mahendra Pratap, and even her husband, Sri K. M. Munshi—praising the wonderful work of the League of Devotees. He also mentioned that the president of the League had recently received a one-hundred-rupee donation in Mathurā from His Excellency the Governor, Mr. Munshi himself. Abhay said that although work had been going on slowly but peacefully in Jhansi, his mind had now been bothered by Mrs. Munshi's negotiations. He requested her not to pressure anyone about his occupying the Bharati Bhavan, though he admitted, "If you or any one of your agents do try . . . the pressure will be more weightful. . . . I am a nonentity in that comparison."

Abhay hoped that by his presenting the details of his League, she would understand that his was a better cause than the Mahila Samity. He quoted the first three verses of the Fourth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, wherein Lord Kṛṣṇa describes how the ancient science of *bhakti-yoga* is received through *paramparā* (the order of succession from one teacher to the next) and how kings are responsible for seeing that Kṛṣṇa consciousness spreads for everyone's benefit. He also argued that since, according to *Bhagavad-gītā*, only a few amongst thousands and thousands of men endeavor for self-realization, and since the League of Devotees engaged its members in self-realization, he was providing an important and rare service. He offered to meet with Mrs. Munshi along with some fifteen *sannyāsīs* from the area and suggested that she work cooperatively with them and understand the importance of the League. The League of Devotees was benefiting all classes. As Śrī Kṛṣṇa had said in *Bhagavad-gītā*, "Even one of a low birth can attain the shelter of the Supreme Lord." But the Mahila Samity, Abhay pointed out, was based on bodily conceptions of caste, creed, color, and sex; therefore, it could not

be as important a cause. Abhay closed by requesting Mrs. Munshi not to try to occupy the Radha Memorial, which was already being used for a noble and well-appreciated cause. He signed, "A. C. Bhaktivedanta, Founder and Secretary, League of Devotees."

Aware that he was involved in an intrigue, Abhay organized his thoughts and set down on paper a "Short History," outlining important events surrounding his possession of the Bharati Bhavan.

SHORT HISTORY

1. I came to Jhansi some time in October, 1952.
2. I delivered some lectures at Gita Mandir on Gandhi Jayanti Day, 1952.
3. Made acquaintance with Prabhakar Sastri.
4. My idea of League of Devotees implemented.
5. He took me to Reva Sankar for Bharati Bhavan.
6. Sri Reva Sankar agreed to hand over the Bharati Bhavan to League of Devotees and he agreed to become a member of it in the presence of Prabhakar, Mitraji, and myself.
7. I write letters from Allahabad to confirm.
8. He confirmed my letter on 10/12/52.
9. Prabhakar intimated the desire of Reva Sankar on 1/1/53.
10. I got the document needed for League of Devotees and came to Jhansi for signature of the members. Reva Sankar signed and agreed to become an executive member.
11. The document was submitted for registration on 4/2/53 at Lucknow. . . . Returned on 10/10/53.
12. The League of Devotees ceremoniously started 16/5/53 and work began. So I am occupying the building since then and continuing my work.

Abhay went on to enumerate more than thirty points, including news publicity and congratulations he had received. He listed the story of how he "came here sacrificing my business and family. . . . I received a telegram from Allahabad instructing the news of burglary by breaking lock. I could not attend the business for work here and it was closed subsequently at a loss of Rs. 7,000."

Abhay thought of turning to some of his *sannyāsī* Godbrothers for help. If he or they could purchase the buildings, his competitors would be silenced. He thought it worthwhile to interest his Godbrothers in purchasing the buildings as an adjunct to their own missions.

Vṛndāvana was not far away—a four-hour train ride to Mathurā and then a short *ṭāṅgā* ride. He had gone there on pilgrimage in October of 1953 and had even looked at an available room in a temple near Keśi-ghāṭa, with the idea of staying there some day. He had also traveled there several other times since he had begun residing in Jhansi. This time, he went to the Imlītala temple to see his Godbrother Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī and ask if he would like to take over the proprietorship of the Bharati Bhavan so that it might be used for preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness according to the teachings of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. But Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī was not interested. After approaching another Godbrother, Dāmodara Mahārāja, who was also not interested in Jhansi, Abhay took the short *ṭāṅgā* ride back to Mathurā to see another Godbrother, Keśava Mahārāja. Keśava Mahārāja was in Mathurā with a group of his disciples to establish a center, but he had not yet located a suitable place. So when Abhay told him about the buildings in Jhansi, he was interested. Abhay and Keśava Mahārāja composed a letter to Mr. Bhayal presenting their requests and the aims of their movement and then traveled to Jhansi in a group—Abhay and Keśava Mahārāja with his disciples.

Keśava Mahārāja and his party stayed for several days in Jhansi, holding *kīrtanas* and lectures. They had an appointment with Reva Sankar Bhayal, but Mr. Bhayal broke it, so they had to wait to see him on another day. Meanwhile, Keśava Mahārāja had time to form an opinion of Jhansi and discuss with Abhay the likelihood of making this his headquarters. He noted that the people were receptive but that the location was too remote. Even before meeting with Mr. Bhayal, Keśava Mahārāja felt reluctant to stake his whole mission in Jhansi. Abhay agreed, aware that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had said that a preacher should go into the big cities and not practice his *bhajana* in seclusion, and he admitted that after two years in Jhansi he had made no full-time followers.

When they finally met with Mr. Bhayal, Mr. Bhayal failed to present clear terms for purchasing the property. He said they were eligible to buy it, but he made their use of the buildings conditional: he wanted to have a say in the nature of the programs they would hold. Abhay knew that this was just a further sign of shady dealings, and he suspected that Mr. Bhayal was under mounting pressure to give the buildings over to the Mahila Samity. Keśava Mahārāja, having lost all interest, decided to go back to Mathurā, and he invited Abhay to join him.

But Abhay remained. Mr. Bhayal wanted him out, and he even returned Abhay's deposit of 210 rupees, claiming that Abhay now had no justification for residing at the Bharati Bhavan. Abhay noted down the latest events in his "Short History."

29. He has also give me a check for Rs. 210 in lieu of my deposit money with him, but he has no money in the bank. The bank has returned it with remark.
30. The money which was given to him . . . was misappropriated by him for his own purpose and now he has given a false check with an arrangement with the bank.
31. It is plain cheating to me from the beginning to the end.
32. I must be compensated for all the money before I can leave the buildings.

But he saw it as the inscrutable will of Kṛṣṇa. Events and opinions were turning him against conducting a mission in Jhansi. It no longer seemed auspicious.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *I wanted to start from there. It was a nice, big house. It was not given to me rightly, but I was using. So, somehow or other, she got imagination that this house is very nice. She was the governor's wife. Through collector and through government officials, she made pressure. So, of course, there were many lawyer friends. They advised me, "You do not give up." But I thought, "Who's going to litigate?" I thought that, "I have left my home, and now should I take up litigation? No, I don't want this house."*

Abhay remembered how the Gaudiya Math preachers had expended their energy for years in the courts. Having terminated his long entanglement with family and business, he had no taste for a legal fight. He could have fought, but he remembered what Keśava Mahārāja had said about Jhansi's being out of the way. Of course, the whole thing had just sprung up here; otherwise Abhay would never have chosen to establish his worldwide League in such an obscure place. The educated young men and women wished him well, just as they had good wishes for the ladies' league, the Theosophy Society, the Ārya Samāj, and many other causes. But their good intentions were certainly short of pure surrender and devotion: even his one disciple could offer him only part-time help. But these considerations had not been sufficient to force him out. The real thing was that he was being driven out.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *If I did not leave, nobody could drive me, that was a fact. But I thought, Who is going to litigate these things? It is the governor's wife, and she is pressing through collector. The manager who is in charge, he had some cinema house. So they had to renew the license. And the collector pressed him that unless you arrange for this house, we are not going to renew your license. I thought, unnecessarily this man will be in trouble. I will have to pay many rupees, and she is the governor's wife.*

He decided to leave. He told his friends to carry on the League of Devotees in his absence. They were sad to see him go, and yet even some of his friends openly praised the work of the ladies' society and were glad to see it come. They had not been able to help him financially, although they knew he had been unable to purchase the buildings on his own.

His closer followers were more affected, but he assured them that their relationship would continue. He would write letters to them—Ācārya Prabhākar, Radhelal Mullik, Mr. Mitra, Dr. Sastri—and he gave them instructions on what they should do. Especially Ācārya Prabhākar—Abhay told him he would be calling for him and expected him to continue as secretary of the League of Devotees, even if they didn't make Jhansi their main residence. Yet it was obvious that this chapter of making ambitious plans for a world movement, going from house to house and village to village, performing *saṅkīrtana*, lecturing on the *Gītā*, distributing *prasādam*—this was ended. And it was not likely that he would return or that the residents of Jhansi could expect to see him again.

When Abhay left the Bharati Bhavan, with its six-foot-high lettering—"LEAGUE OF DEVOTEES"—painted across the outside wall, he felt sad. It had been a natural, spontaneous success for him. The young, educated people of Jhansi had looked up to him from the start, and had it not been for the intrigue, he would never have left. But he felt he had no real choice. He had come as a family man on business and was leaving as a homeless *vānaprastha*, forced to take shelter of Kṛṣṇa. His plans were uncertain, but his desire was strong and his health good. So he moved on to Mathurā, carrying with him the Deity of Lord Caitanya.

CHAPTER EIGHT

New Delhi— “Crying Alone in the Wilderness”

I have got the clue of going “Back to Godhead” just after leaving my present material body, and in order to take along with me all my contemporary men and women of the world, I have started my paper, “Back to Godhead,” as one of the means to the way. Please don’t think of me as . . . something wonderful or a madman when I say that I shall go “Back to Godhead” after leaving my present material body! It is quite possible for everyone and all of us.

—From a letter to India’s president,
Mr. Rajendra Prasad

When Abhay arrived in Mathurā, he sought out Keśava Mahārāja, who was now establishing his *maṭha*, and presented him with the Deity of Lord Caitanya. At Keśava Mahārāja’s request, Abhay agreed to stay there and edit the *Gauḍīya Patrikā*. Abhay was given a room, and for the first time (aside from brief visits) he lived in a *maṭha* with his Godbrothers. As a senior, experienced devotee, Abhay held classes and instructed the *brahmacārīs*—who were young, uneducated, and even illiterate—in the disciplines of devotional service and the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

He had only recently begun his duties when Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī, another *sannyāsī* Godbrother, asked Bhaktivedanta Prabhu to assist him in New Delhi at his *āśrama*, Gaudiya Saṅgha. Both Keśava Mahārāja and Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī recognized Abhay as an accomplished writer and editor and wanted to work with him. It was accepted amongst Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's disciples that A. C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhu was an expert preacher and writer, whether in English, Hindi, or Bengali. Now Keśava Mahārāja wanted Abhay to stay and work on the *Gauḍīya Patrikā*, while Bhaktisāraṅga Mahārāja, who had to go to Bengal, was requesting him to come to Delhi to produce *The Harmonist* (known in Hindi as *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*). Abhay was agreeable to Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī's proposition, and Keśava Mahārāja consented, on the condition that Abhay also continue to edit the *Gauḍīya Patrikā*, at least by mail.

As an editor Abhay was in his element, and he was happy to preach in cooperation with his Godbrothers. Although Abhay didn't consider himself an accomplished scholar or author, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had been pleased by his writings and had encouraged him to continue, and now these senior *sannyāsīs* of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī were turning to him for help. They were practically competing to see who would get the benefit of his services. Perhaps, Abhay thought, this should be his life's work: serving humbly under the direction of his Godbrothers.

His ejection from Jhansi had been a kind of setback; at least it had left him temporarily unsure of how Kṛṣṇa wanted to use him. But now his Godbrothers seemed to be answering the question. Living and working in an *āśrama* with *brahmacārīs* and *sannyāsīs* was a way of life Abhay had once considered too austere. And Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had remarked, "Better he live outside your company." But now he would either have to struggle alone, with nothing, or stay within the shelter of a friendly portion of the Gaudiya Math. Perhaps he could carry out his desires to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness within the *āśramas* of his Godbrothers.

Since he would soon be the editor of *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*, he began thinking of how to expand it. It was a scholarly Vaiṣṇava journal, but cheaply produced and with a very limited circulation. He envisioned it surpassing India's slick *Illustrated Weekly*; it should be more popular than *Time* or *Life* magazines of America. And why not? Kṛṣṇa was no poor man. Abhay thought of how he could start an ambitious subscription program by approaching the many prominent and wealthy men of New Delhi.



The courtyard of the Rādhā-Govinda temple, Calcutta.

The Rādhā-Govinda Deities have been worshiped in the Mulliks' temple in Calcutta for many generations.





The Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities
Abhay worshiped in his
childhood.



When he was eight years old,
Abhay entered Mutty Lall
Seal's free school in Calcutta.



From 1916 to 1920, Abhay attended Scottish Churches' College.

A classroom at Scottish Churches' College.





Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura with his family. His son Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī is on the far left, top row.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī in the forefront of the *saṅkīrtana* procession from the Gaudiya Math, Ultadanga, Calcutta, in October 1930.



Abhay used this picture of
Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī
in the logo of *Back to
Godhead* magazine.



His Divine Grace Śrīla
Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī
Ṭhākura.





Allahabad, circa 1924. Left to right: (sitting) Abhay and his son Prayag Raj; his father, Gour Mohan; his eldest sister, Rajesvari, with his daughter, Sulakshman; (standing) Abhay's wife, Radharani; his nephew Tulasi; his brother Krishna Charan.



Allahabad, 1930, after the passing away of Gour Mohan De. Left to right: Abhay, Gour Mohan's portrait, Krishna Charan; (on floor) Prayag Raj, Abhay's new son, Sulakshman.



The buildings for the League of Devotees in Jhansi in 1953.





The altar of the Keśavaji temple in Mathurā. Abhay donated the Lord Caitanya Deity on the left in 1955.

The Vamśi-gopālaji temple, at the end of a narrow street by the Yamunā River, near the Keśi bathing *ghāṭa*.





The view from the Vamśi-gopālaji temple roof, showing the expanse of the Yamunā River.



The tower of the temple at Keśi-ghāṭa, as seen from the Vamśi-gopālaji roof.



September 17, 1959, the day Abhay took *sannyāsa*. Left to right: Muni Mahārāja, Bhaktiprajñāna Keśava Mahārāja, and A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami.

Bhaktivedanta Swami's room at the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple in Chippiwada, New Delhi, which he used as an office during the writing and printing of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.





On a veranda outside his room at Chippiwada.

The *samādhi* tomb of Rūpa Gosvāmi at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple in Vṇḍāvana.





A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami's room at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple.

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami's kitchen at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. From this room he could see the *samādhi* of Rūpa Gosvāmī.





The press that printed the first volume of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in 1962.

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami and Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri at the Parliament Building in New Delhi in June 1964.





A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami completed the three volumes of the First Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* by early 1965.

Calcutta's *Dainik Basuamati*, announcing A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami's departure for America on August 13, 1965.

১৯৬৫ সালের ১৩
আগস্ট, কলকাতা
দৈনিক বাসুমতি
এই পত্রিকায়
প্রথম প্রকাশিত
হয়েছে।

শ্রীমদ্ভগবতের প্রথম স্কন্ধের ত্রয়োদশ অধ্যায়ের শেষে
স্বামীজী মহোদয় কর্তৃক প্রকাশিত হইয়াছে।

**আমেরিকায় ভ্রমণের
বাবী**
স্বামীজী মহোদয়
আমেরিকা যুক্তরাষ্ট্র
দেশে ভ্রমণের উদ্দেশ্যে
গমন করিবেন।



স্বামীজী মহোদয়
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দেশে ভ্রমণের উদ্দেশ্যে
গমন করিবেন।

**আসামে শিল্প
উন্নয়ন প্রসঙ্গ**
আসামের শিল্প উন্নয়ন
প্রসঙ্গ।

আসামের শিল্প উন্নয়ন
প্রসঙ্গ।

**কলিকাতা
বিজ্ঞান ও
অভিযান্ত্রিক**

কলিকাতা
বিজ্ঞান ও
অভিযান্ত্রিক

**বর্তমানের দুই রাজ্যের
সংসদ**

**হাজরাবী সা
মগধপ্রদেশ
সরকারের**

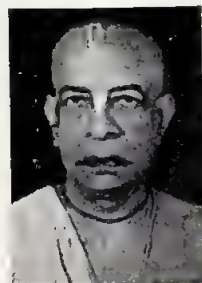


From the cover of the First Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, published in India in 1962.

The pamphlet A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami printed and took with him to America aboard the *Jaladuta*.

"SRIMAD BHAGWATAM"
INDIA'S MESSAGE OF
PEACE AND GOODWILL

Sixty Volumes of Elaborate English Version by



Translated by
A. C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI

CARRIED BY
THE SCINDIA STEAM NAV. CO., LIMITED
BOMBAY.

All over the world for scientific knowledge of God.
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR
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Then, by Kṛṣṇa's grace, he would soon be able to print color photos and use high-quality paper for *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*. He would give it his best effort, depending on Kṛṣṇa. And while soliciting subscribers, he could take his book manuscripts and try to get them published. Dr. Allagappa in South India had wanted to publish his *Geetopanishad*; no doubt there were many men like him. Or perhaps Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī would be willing to publish Abhay's works with funds from the Gaudiya Saṅgha.

Abhay soon received a letter from Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī's assistant, carefully instructing him how to travel to Delhi at the least expense. He was to travel by train third class to Delhi and from there take a *ṭāṅgā*. Since *ṭāṅgās* at the station gate charged too much, Abhay should first walk about a hundred meters towards the right-hand side of the station, where he would find a cheaper one. Were he to ride alone, he should pay no more than one rupee and twelve annas, but he should try to share the *ṭāṅgā* with another passenger—that would be cheaper. "Keeping the crematorium to your left-hand side," the assistant instructed him, "if you look towards the right, then you will be able to see our red flag and the signboard written in Hindi and English. When you reach here, we will pay for the *ṭāṅgā*."

At the Gaudiya Saṅgha, Abhay found a disconcerting state of affairs. In the absence of their *guru*, Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī, the *brahmacārīs* were quarreling and shirking their duties, and as a result the preaching and donation-gathering were being neglected. Cleanliness, Deity worship, cooking, and even peace amongst the devotees were below standard. And like most of the *maṭhas* of his Godbrothers, the Gaudiya Saṅgha was poor. Abhay had come thinking he would be editing a magazine, but he found himself contending with a group of quarreling neophyte devotees. He learned that the *brahmacārī* responsible for giving public lectures had not done any preaching, the devotees who had previously been holding *kīrtanas* in people's homes were now negligent, and the errand boy refused to run because he had lost his bicycle. Then a *brahmacārī* handed Abhay a letter from Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī requesting him to take up the general management of the *maṭha*.

Inspire everyone to be engaged in service, otherwise, I do not know how we are going to print the English monthly magazine. . . . Since we don't have much money in the fund and since the brahmacaris are quite careless, Akinchan Maharaj wrote that he is unable to take the responsibility of the

management. It will be very nice if you could keep your eyes on these affairs.

And Abhay found other obstacles in trying to produce *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*: no typewriter, and bad relations with the printer.

In a few days, Abhay received another letter from Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī, telling him what articles to print, cautioning him not to change essential elements in the magazine, and reminding him of his special duty:

I have asked Akinchan Maharaj to hand over the keys of my room to you so that you may use my room only for your office work. As you are there, you should try to maintain peace in the asrama for giving necessary instructions to one and all.

Abhay saw that he could do no editorial work until the laxity and petty quarreling in the *āśrama* stopped. But when he tried to help as Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī had directed, some of the devotees rebelled and even wrote to their spiritual master complaining.

It was against many obstacles that Abhay met the publisher's deadline for the August 1955 issue of *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*. Yet owing to the printer's delay, the magazine did not come out until September. When at last the first copies were delivered, Abhay sent several to Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī in Calcutta, asking for his response.

Abhay never heard from his Godbrother directly, but received further instructions from Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī's secretary, Rāmānanda, who pointed out various mistakes in the issue, without mentioning whether Bhaktisāraṅga had been pleased with it. The errors were mostly technical matters of style: Abhay had done the contents page in a different way and had not printed Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī's name exactly as he had wanted it on all his articles. Regarding Abhay's request for a typewriter, Rāmānanda wrote that if "the matters are distinctly written there is no necessity of them being given to the printer in typewriting."

Abhay wrote to Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī requesting him to return to

Delhi and establish a peaceful atmosphere in the *maṭha*. Regarding *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*, Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī had suggested that the paper for the cover be improved and that the whole magazine be done on nicer paper by an up-to-date press, and Abhay agreed. But improvements depended on money.

The suggestion . . . that the paper may be printed from Calcutta is alright. But my suggestion is that either in Calcutta or in Delhi we must have our own press with good equipments so that we may be able to broadcast the message of Shri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu in all the important languages specially in Hindi and in English. Hindi is meant for all India propaganda while English is meant for world-wide propaganda.

Abhay further reported that since it was almost impossible to expect a printer to work speedily from handwritten manuscripts, he had already rented a typewriter. He also mentioned his ideas for increasing the number of subscribers.

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Abhay's son Brindaban came to live with him for a few months at the Gaudiya Saṅgha. There was no question of Abhay's returning to his family, and Brindaban simply associated with his father, following the routines of the *maṭha* and helping Abhay in his duties.

One day a prominent advocate, the president of the Hindu Mahasabha, paid an unexpected visit to the Gaudiya Saṅgha. The *maṭha* was mostly deserted, and there was no *prasādam* on hand, so Abhay and Brindaban received the prominent guest, cooking for him, offering him *prasādam*, and acquainting him with the activities of the Saṅgha.

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When Abhay wasn't busy managing the disorganized *maṭha* and working on *Gauḍīya Patrikā* and *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*, he spent his time preparing a Hindi translation of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Although he was more accustomed to writing in English and Bengali, he reasoned that as

long as he was preaching in Hindi-speaking areas, such a book would be important.

Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī wrote that he wanted to print only five hundred copies of *Sajjana-toṣaṇī* for the September issue. But Abhay wanted to print more. After making an agreement with the printer that the charges would be the same for one thousand copies as for five hundred, he wrote Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī, informing him of the good news. Abhay also told him that he had recently secured a donation of printing paper and that he had arranged for a one-quarter reduction in the postal charges.

So why for the matter of saving some papers we shall not print the full number. In my opinion we should print more than 1000 copies every month and distribute them in large scale.

But Bhaktisāraṅga replied through a brief postcard that they should print no more than five hundred.

Abhay continued his attempts to improve *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*. For him it was not a perfunctory duty but absorbing preaching. In a letter to Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī, he expressed anxiety over waiting for him to send articles for the next issue. Funds were scarce—so scarce that Abhay had no decent *dhōṭī*—and yet he continued to envision a glorious future for *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*.

I wish to see this paper just to the standard of “*Illustrated Weekly*” with numerous pictures in order to make it a very popular literature and for this I wish to move myself to secure subscribers as well as advertisers. I wish to visit good businessmen, insurance companies and Govt. officers in this connection. But I have no proper dress at all. I want two sets of good dresses in order to take up this responsibility and I shall be glad to have your decision on this matter. It is my heart’s desire that this paper is improved to the highest elevation.

Abhay also requested that Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī help him publish his Hindi *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Some “non-Bengalee gentlemen” were demanding the book and had assured Abhay that they would pay twenty-

five rupees per volume. Abhay requested a loan of six hundred rupees, under any arrangement suitable to Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī, for publishing the first part of this work. "If this part is sold out," Abhay wrote, "the other parts will automatically come out."

But just as life in the Gaudiya Saṅgha and work on the *Sajjana-toṣaṇī* under Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī's hand produced strain for Abhay, Abhay's ambitions for increased circulation and his strong editorial opinions also created strain for Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī. In response to Abhay's letter, Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī's secretary, Rāmānanda, wrote a letter full of flowery praises of Bhaktivedanta Prabhu, but with the intent of dismissing him from his position with the Gaudiya Saṅgha.

With innumerable humble obeisances at the lotus feet of a Vaisnava

Srimat Bhaktivedanta Prabhu,

We received your letter written to Sri Guru Maharaja on the 5/10/55. Your project is very lofty, and you are a well wisher of our society; we got to know that also. . . .

Since the last two months, in spite of so many difficulties—the difficulties of prasadam and misunderstanding of the devotees there—and in spite of various other difficulties, the kind of enthusiasm that you have shown, that is possible only for an elevated Vaisnava like yourself.

You are a favorite Vaisnava of Srila Prabhupada and a friend of all the special associates of Srila Prabhupada. Most of the devotees in Gaudiya Sangha Asrama in Delhi are new and less respectful. They cannot give proper respect to an elevated personality like yourself . . . Especially the lofty speculations that you have. Our society, at the present circumstances, has a little ideas. We hope, with all your qualities, very soon you will become settled independently and fulfilling the desires of Srila Prabhupada, start preaching very widely.

We are suspecting that it won't be possible for an able and respectable Vaisnava like yourself to stay there long adjusting with the illiterate and less educated devotees of the Gaudiya Sangha in Delhi. Moreover, you are the head of the editorial board of Srimat Kesava Maharaja's Vedanta Samiti's Gaudiya Patrika and Bhagavata Patrika, so if you spend much time in our asrama then he might become annoyed. With many devotees,

he is setting out to circumambulate the land of Braja and we are sure that he will need your assistance in this parikrama. So, you consider all the pros and cons and if you do not neglect the duty as a leader of his organization we will be pleased.

Some articles have been sent for the October issue *Sajjana Toshani* and some more might be sent. We will be very much obliged if you would instruct Kesavananda Prabhu to publish the October issue. We hope that Sri Sri Guru Maharaja will be able to personally publish the November and December issues. We wish to transfer it to Calcutta from the month of January. Sri Sri Guru Maharaja has become old and most of the time he has to depend on us. We are happy to know that you are trying very hard to publish the *Caitanya Caritamṛta* in Hindi, but at the present circumstances, it won't be possible for us to invest 600 rupees from our fund in order to print that. Because Sri Sri Guru Maharaja has taken up many projects in different directions now and he has to spend a lot of money, so he can't take the responsibility of printing that book.

Kesavananda Prabhu wrote that your clothes are getting torn, so buy a pair of clothes from the fund of the temple and if the devotees commit offenses at your lotus feet due to their shortsightedness, please forgive them.

(Signed) The servant of the servant of
the Vaisnava, Sri Ramananda Das

It was not a fact that Abhay was being called for leadership in Keśava Mahārāja's *parikrama*, although it was a good excuse for Rāmānanda's suggesting that Abhay leave the Gaudiya Saṅgha. So after living as a dutiful member in the *āśramas* of Keśava Mahārāja and Bhaktisāraṅga Mahārāja, Abhay was again on his own.

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Without income or institutional shelter, Abhay began staying in various homes in Delhi, living from week to week wherever he received an invitation. In terms of food, clothing, and shelter, these were the most difficult times he had ever gone through. Since his childhood, there had always been plenty of food and good clothes and no question of where he

would live. He had been the pet child of his father, and he had received special guidance and affection from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. But now Abhay sometimes felt alone.

Homeless, he moved around Delhi from one temporary residence to another—a Viṣṇu temple, a room at the Kapoor College of Commerce. But he was seeking donors, preaching from *Bhagavad-gītā*, writing. His goal wasn't to find a permanent residence, but to print his transcendental literature and to establish (or join forces with) a pure, powerful movement for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Abhay made a list of several books he wanted to publish.

1. SHRI CHAITANYA CHARITAMRITA (HINDI)	2,000 pages.
2. GEETOPANISHAD (ENGLISH)	1200 "
3. SCIENCE OF DEVOTION (ENGLISH)	300 "
4. LORD CHAITANYA'S SAMKEERTAN MOVEMENT (ENGLISH)	300 "
5. MESSAGE OF GODHEAD (ENGLISH)	300 "
6. BHAGAVANER KATHA (BENGALI)	50 "

But to print he needed donors. He called on wealthy men in their offices and homes, presenting his manuscripts and explaining his mission. He had a list of donors, but few responded. And when he did receive a donation, it was usually only five or ten rupees. Occasionally he would receive a letter of appreciation or endorsement.

One appreciation came from Narain Dass Rai Bahadur, a retired executive engineer and secretary of the Birla Mandir Trust, who had attended a public reading Abhay had held in the presence of a popular *guru*, Mother Anandamoyee. Impressed by Abhay's reading from his Hindi *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Mother Anandamoyee had donated fifty rupees and suggested that Abhay also visit a well-known *sādhū*, Sri Hari Baba, who was lying ill in the hospital. Abhay, accompanied by Narain Dass, had then visited Hari Baba, who had claimed that Abhay's reading put him into ecstasy. Meanwhile, Narain Dass was becoming inclined to help, and in December he wrote a letter suggesting that everyone "extend their helping hand for the successful publication of Shri A. C. Bhaktivedanta's various writings in Hindi, English, and Bengali. I wish him all success in his noble attempt."

Abhay would show this and other such letters to prospective supporters. In Delhi it was not difficult to see government ministers, judges, lawyers, business executives, religious heads; there was always someone willing to hear seriously and, occasionally, to offer support. Thus Abhay, with the two *dhotīs* and *kurtās* the Gaudiya Saṅgha had supplied him, with his ability to preach and convince, but with little support and no fixed residence, continued his preaching, undaunted.

Writing and trying to publish was only half his effort; the other half was taking part in efforts for a world movement like the League of Devotees. Through Narain Dass, Abhay inquired whether there might be a way he could do his work under the auspices of the Birla Mandir (one of the largest and richest temples in Delhi). Abhay proposed that he be put in charge of propaganda in the English language, both within India and abroad. Since Narain Dass considered himself a follower of *sanātana-dharma*, Abhay wrote to him explaining how the teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā* set forth the real *sanātana-dharma*. Abhay had many ideas about how *sanātana-dharma*, as the eternal religion for all living beings, could be expanded and practically applied—if Narain Dass would but help him.

I want to train up 40 educated youths, to learn this science of transcendental knowledge and just prepare them for going to foreign countries for . . . missionary work. . . .

To start immediately an English paper or to revive my paper 'Back to Godhead' in the style of Illustrated Weekly of India. . . .

To organize a Sankirtan party which shall not be only of good singers and musicians but must also be used to [practice] 'Sadhana' or self-realization. . . .

Abhay promised that as soon as he had done some groundwork, he, along with men and equipment, could start for foreign countries to propagate this missionary work. But he admitted also that he was externally in dire straits: "Kindly do arrange for the above immediately and give me a proper place to live. I must remove from this temporary quarter by Monday next latest."

The directors of the Birla Mandir did not take Abhay up on his offer. But he thought of another way of engaging them: he would hold a public

meeting at the Birla Mandir to help generate interest in the League of Devotees. He approached Shri R. N. Agarwal, president of the Delhi Municipal Committee, who, after hearing the names of several respectable people who would be attending, agreed to preside over the meeting. Abhay set the date for December 22 and printed five hundred announcements and two hundred invitation cards.

Striking a cosmopolitan note, he stated in his announcement, "By the grace of the Almighty, Delhi is becoming . . . the centre of cultural association of the world." The leaders of both Russia and India had recently pointed to the need for cultural contact between all nations. But the highest culture, Abhay suggested, was scientific spiritual knowledge; therefore, the best cultural resources in the world existed in India. And these resources, Abhay stressed, should not be left to the unorganized *sādhus* and *sannyāsīs*, but should be taken up by important members of society in an organized way.

The December 22 *Hindustan Times* listed the meeting of the League of Devotees in the "Today's Engagements" column, along with announcements for meetings of the Rotary Club, the Tagore Society, the Indian Council of World Affairs, Bharat Scouts, and the Indian Pharmaceutical Congress.

The League's meeting began with a *kīrtana* led by Professor H. Chand, and then A. C. Bhaktivedanta, founder and secretary of the League of Devotees, explained his movement's objectives. Then Narain Dass spoke and afterwards read a number of proposed resolutions from the founder-secretary attesting that the persons present supported the League of Devotees and that they recommended that the central government of India also support it as a movement for world peace based on Gandhian principles. After adoption of the resolutions, the meeting closed with another *kīrtana* and *prasādam*.

Abhay was convinced that if his well-wishers and fellow humanitarians would support him on a grand scale, he could create a movement for world peace, based on the principles of devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa. But his role was simply to present Kṛṣṇa consciousness to whomever he could. The results were up to Kṛṣṇa. Abhay was aware that the good intentions of most of the participants in his Birla Mandir meeting would not go past that one meeting. But he wasn't discouraged.

Through all his tireless evangelism, he maintained a philosophic jollity. In one sense he was already fully satisfied; he was happy to be working on behalf of his spiritual master.

Although he was changing addresses so fast that his mail could hardly catch up to him, he wrote a newspaper ad for a home study course.

EDUCATIONAL

Study the spiritual secret of "Bhagwat Geeta" at home by correspondence and be a strong man. Full course fee Rs. 50 only. The instruction is imparted not in the ordinary imaginative way of qualified interpretations, but in the "Parampara" system of preceptorial succession. All questions are properly solved. Apply A. C. Bhaktivedanta. Students of all communities and nationalities are welcome.

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He had not published *Back to Godhead* in four years (since 1952), but he decided to revive it. *Back to Godhead* was a mission worthy of his full attention, and it took all his efforts—to collect the funds, compose the articles, see to the printing, and then distribute a thousand copies. The money he would raise by obtaining interviews and soliciting donations. One donor and friend was Justice Bipin Chandra Misra, a Supreme Court judge in New Delhi.

Justice Misra: *He used to come to me once a month. I gave him donations for his paper. It was only a four-page magazine, but it showed his study of the subject and his earnestness and his devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa. He appeared to be a very simple man and modest, and it was pleasant to talk to him. He had a smiling demeanor. The main thing was his humility. He could talk with affection and confidence, and he knew we were discussing things near to God. So every talk with him would subliminate us.*

I was a rather important personality at that time in religious affairs. But he would not be expected to make any contribution to the main religious life of Delhi at that time, because of the language difficulty, because his aim was to reach the English-educated persons, not the Hindi

ones. And also, because his means and his popularity were not at all established, the magazine did not have a wide appeal among these people. Other religious leaders were all well established. The only thing that impressed one and was worth noticing at that time was the simplicity of his abiding faith in God's name and His mission.

Writing articles was no problem. By the grace of his spiritual master, he was neither short of ideas nor unable to set them down. Translating and commenting on the Vaiṣṇava scriptures, his pen flowed freely. He was inspired by the miracle of the press, the *br̥hat mrdāṅga*. The work of writing his message down and printing it a thousand times—with the awareness and urgency of speaking directly to everyone, not just people in Delhi or India, but *everyone*—put Abhay into an ecstatic meditation. He would contemplate how copies of *Back to Godhead* could reach thoughtful people who might read them gratefully.

Nor was maintenance a problem. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Śukadeva Gosvāmī had declared that a devotee's problem was not food, clothing, or shelter. If one had no bed, he could always lie on the ground and use his arms for a pillow. For clothes he could always find some rejected garments in the street. For food he could live on fruits from the trees. And for lodging he could stay in the mountain caves. Nature supplies all necessities; a transcendentalist should not flatter materialists to maintain himself. Of course, Abhay wasn't living in the mountains or jungle but in the city of New Delhi, yet he had virtually adopted the renounced mode Śukadeva had suggested—not to punish his body or prove himself pure and uncompromising, but because he *had* to live in poverty if he wanted to regularly produce *Back to Godhead*.

For Abhay it was a great labor of love, and purchasing paper for printing became a priority even before eating. Neglecting his personal needs for preaching was a manifestation of his faith in Kṛṣṇa, of which Abhay suffered no scarcity. He had full faith that if he served Kṛṣṇa, he would be provided for. To work alone was not an insurmountable problem; it was pleasant and simple. It was better than having to manage the neophyte inmates of the Gaudiya Saṅgha. The ecstasy of working hard to serve his spiritual master was not a problem. The problem was the condition of the world.

According to the *sāstras*, the current age, Kali-yuga, would create continual degradation in society. And Abhay could see this evidenced every

day in Delhi. Delhi, formerly known as Hastināpura, had been the ancient capital of King Yudhiṣṭhira, who, five thousand years before, under the patronage of Lord Kṛṣṇa had been the most opulent king in the world and whose citizens had been fully protected and provided for. Now, after a thousand years of foreign subjugation, India was again independent, and New Delhi was the capital.

Yet even in Abhay's relatively brief sixty years of experience, he had seen Indian culture—which in his childhood had retained much of the original purity of the Vedic age—degrade. Now he saw a society in which his countrymen were victimized by the propaganda that they could be happy in gross materialistic indulgence. The British had introduced tea, tobacco, meat, and factories; and now, even after independence, these were a part of India's new way of life. Having driven away the British, the Indians were imitating Western ways, and India's leaders were deliberately ignoring the Vedic principles of God consciousness, the very treasures India was meant to distribute to the whole world. Abhay had seen how India had abandoned her spiritual heritage and gone running after the modernization of the West—but now, where was that material advancement? Were Indians any happier in their independence than they had been in British days? To Abhay, the overpopulated city was a hell of ruffians and fools. Although thousands of poor people were employed in the burgeoning steel mills and tire factories, their living conditions had worsened.

Abhay voiced his concern about these conditions in his *Back to Godhead*. Could the poor eat the nuts and bolts produced in the factories? Could they be nourished by cinema, television, or sex songs on the radio? The leaders were unable to see that abandoning spiritual principles had led to the very ills they officially abhorred: a decadent, rebellious youth, corruption in every area of civic life, and even economic instability and scarcity. When Abhay had been a youth in Calcutta, there had been no cinema billboards advertising lurid sexual fantasies, but now India had developed the third largest movie industry in the world, and film advertisements were all over Delhi. Beef shops and liquor shops had sprung up. The newspapers regularly ran editorials deploring the degradation of young Indian boys who teased, insulted, and affronted women on the street. Women's leagues complained about increased juvenile promiscuity and the obscene treatment of women in films and advertisements. But there were no upright *brāhmaṇas* or saintly administrators to do anything about it.

Abhay saw the need for a respiritualization of society. But society was rushing headlong in the opposite direction. In February, even as Abhay was trying to publish his *Back to Godhead*, Prime Minister Nehru, while speaking with concern of India's "crisis of the spirit," simultaneously launched another Five-Year Plan for rapid industrialization. Everyone from the prime minister down to the common man was concerned about the symptomatic problems, but no one seemed to understand that the real problem was the lack of God consciousness.

Abhay had to deliver the medicine for the ills of Kali-yuga. He knew it was needed on a much larger scale than he could reach on his own, but even to administer one issue of *Back to Godhead* was almost beyond his means. Writing the articles, typing them, taking them to the printer, and distributing them should not have been the work of one lone, impoverished devotee, but in working with his Godbrothers he had met with their decided lack of organization and their lack of desire for vigorous preaching. Bhaktisāraṅga Gosvāmī had seemed determined to keep *Sajjana-toṣaṇī* small, and his *maṭha*, like so many others, had been ineffectual in attracting new members. This was the petty-mindedness that would cripple preaching. Therefore, he was now working alone on a small scale—happy in his spiritual welfare work, yet aware that his four-page newspaper was only a drop of water in the desert.

In February of 1956—while the U.S. was struggling with civil rights, while Khrushchev and Eisenhower were both openly deploring the arms race and were maneuvering in nuclear disarmament talks, and while the Shah of Iran was visiting New Delhi—Abhay was trying to print *Back to Godhead*. In winter's discomfort he walked through the early-morning streets of Delhi to visit Surendra Kumar Jain, the printer, to read the latest proofs. By walking he saved money. Only when he was delivering paper from the paper dealer to the printer would he rent a ricksha. He had no *cādar*, only a lightweight cotton jacket, and he wore rubber shoes. He also wore a cotton hat that covered his ears and tied beneath his chin, protecting him from the forty-degree wintery mornings and the sometimes gusty winds.

Kumar Jain: *My first impression was that he was a nice person and straightforward. I felt pity also because of the conditions under which he would come. I know he didn't have even twenty-five paisa. He would come all the way on foot and without any breakfast or anything. He*

would come in the morning to the press, and when I would ask him, "Swamiji, did you have anything to eat this morning?" he would say, "Oh, no, Mr. Jain. I just came because I had to see the proofs."

"That's all right," I would say, "I will get breakfast for you." I would call for breakfast, and then he would sit and work.

He would do the proofreading himself. The printing was done by me, and most of the time he would like to be present when that final printing was being done. He would come in the morning around seven and stay until he had seen all the proofs. It was a regular thing that he would come without breakfast, I would arrange for breakfast, and we would sit across the table from one another for hours together. He was always talking on religious subjects only. But when we would be sitting, especially when waiting for the proofs to come, we would discuss many things. I felt that he knew quite a lot, because he was a well-read person. He was more a friend than just a person coming to get things printed. He was a very simple man, straightforward in his habits. But his mission at that time was particularly to further the movement of Back to Godhead.

His financial condition was very, very weak. Sometimes the printing would be difficult because he was not able to arrange for the paper. Many times I told him that if he was feeling difficulty, why was he continuing? But he said, "No, it is my mission, and I will always carry it on as far as possible." I tried to accommodate him to the maximum possible extent. But he was a real pauper.

I only did the printing, and he had to arrange for the paper. So sometimes it was delayed. Although my job was printing, sometimes I would say, "All right, you are so keen. I will give you the paper." But usually he would arrange for it himself, since we only did printing. He would bring it in a ricksha.

We were not uncomfortable together, but as business would have it, if the bills were standing for a long time, then I would ask him if he could do something about it. He would say, "Don't worry, you can be sure that your money is coming." I never asked him where his funds were coming from, because I felt that it was his personal matter. But it was embarrassing for him when he could not pay, so I never tried to embarrass him. He was concerned that if he didn't have money, how could he print the paper? And he definitely wanted to run that paper.

He wanted to preach the teachings of the Gītā. He thought of it as a sort of movement, that it was the only way that people in the world could find peace. His conviction was very strong.

After picking up the copies from the printer, Abhay would walk around the city selling them. He would take a seat at a tea stand, and when someone sat beside him Abhay would ask him please to take a copy of *Back to Godhead*. He also went to the homes and offices of people who had already donated or agreed to see him, and he sought out new contacts, sometimes on recommendation or sometimes by going uninvited wherever he could find a potential reader. When he delivered copies to regular donors, he would discuss the previous issue's philosophy with them and sometimes write articles on topics they requested: "Our esteemed friend, Sri Bishan Prasad Maheswari, one of the learned advocates of the Supreme Court, has requested us to write something on the principle of fruitive action with special reference to Vice and its potency." Often donors agreed to see him not so much out of genuine interest or affection as out of a sense of obligation; in their traditional Hindu piety, they felt obliged to see the *sādhu*, take his paper, and even think well of him—but not necessarily to read his newspaper. Once, when Abhay was approaching a well-to-do house, the owner came onto the second-floor veranda and shouted, "Go away! We don't want you here!"

Abhay, responding to the resistance (polite and impolite) that he met while selling *Back to Godhead*, wrote an article, "NO TIME, A Chronic Disease of the Common Man," for the March 16 edition.

When we approach some gentleman and request him to become a reader of "Back to Godhead," sometimes we are replied with the words "NO TIME."

They say that they are too busy in earning money for maintaining the body and soul together. But when we ask them what do they mean by the 'Soul,' they have nothing to reply.

Dr. Meghnath Saha, a great scientist, was busily going to a meeting of the planning Commission. Unfortunately while going in his car on the road he died and could not ask Death to wait because he had no time at that moment.

Dr. Ansari, the great Congress leader, while dying in a moving train, on his way to home, said that he was himself a medical man and almost all his family men were so, but Death is so cruel that he was dying without any medical treatment.

Therefore, Death has been described in the Bhagwat as...the **indefatigable**. Death is awaiting everyone although everybody thinks that he may not die. **There is life after death.** The busy man should try to know this also as to whither he is going. This life is but a spot in his longest sojourn and a sane person should not be busy with a spot only. Nobody says that the body should not be maintained—but everybody should know from “Bhagwat Geeta,” that the body is the outward dress and the ‘Soul’ is the real person who puts on the dress. So if the dress is taken care of only, without any care of the real person—it is sheer foolishness and waste of time.

Abhay was an unusual newspaper vendor. He didn’t loudly hawk his paper on the street or sell it from a newsstand; he approached individuals quietly as they sat to drink tea, or he would call on acquaintances in their offices or places of business. Taking a copy from the stack he carried underneath his arm, he would present what appeared to be an ordinary tabloid newspaper with bold black headlines across the front page. But what odd headlines—“The Lowest of the Mankind,” “Philosophical Problems Within Social Awareness,” “Sufferings of Humanity,” “The Pure Consciousness of Nationalism.” Anyone could tell at a glance that this was no ordinary newspaper. Abhay would say something to try to convince them to take it anyway—before they said, “No time.”

On behalf of his spiritual master and the previous Vaiṣṇava authorities, he was playing a role, the newspaper salesman—a smiling demeanor, a gentlemanly invitation. No, it wasn’t an ordinary newspaper, but they would find it interesting, and it cost only six paisa. Thus he was extending the mercy of Lord Caitanya, handing out the truths of the *Vedas* in the easy-to-take form of a newspaper.

Despite his desperate poverty and the urgency of his message, his writing was never shrill, strident, or fanatical. He wrote expecting to find his reader prepared to hear sound philosophy and always willing to accept the truth, especially when presented logically and relevantly and supported by the authoritative Vedic literature. Although experience on the streets of Delhi had shown him that people were shallow, distracted,

and uninterested in self-realization, he knew that most people, at least at some time in their lives, pondered the crucial themes of philosophy: whether God exists, whether He is a person, why there is suffering. So Abhay appealed to their higher sentiments.

Spring of 1956 brought visits from U.S. Secretary of State Dulles and, a few days later, Lord Mountbatten, the former governor-general of India, who was greeted at the airport by thousands. Then came the celebration of the once-sacred day of Holi, when urchins spray all passersby with colored dyes. Prime Minister Nehru toured the Delhi slums expressing disgust at the prevailing conditions. He announced India's intention to develop atomic energy, stressing its peaceful uses. The weather warmed. A border clash began between India and Pakistan. Delhi railway workers went on strike. Meanwhile, Abhay continued to preach.

He somehow managed to meet the financial, editorial, and printing demands and published his sixth issue for the year of 1956, the May 20 edition of *Back to Godhead*. The front page carried a special notice:

As a matter of Principle

Please read 'Back to Godhead' and revive your deeper aspect of personality. There is nothing in it which is our ideology manufactured by imperfect sense-perception but all that it contains are messages of our liberated sages. We are simply helping them to speak again to men and women in easy language for real life. Every responsible man and woman must therefore read it regularly at a cost of very insignificant sum of Rs. 2/4/- a year or As. -/3/- per month. Do not neglect it. It is for your interest. It will create a happy society of humanity.

In “How to Broadcast the Teachings of Bhagwat Geeta,” he talked about the need for spiritual organization in society. A model community, which he named *Gītā-nāgarī* (“the village where the Bhagwat Geeta is sung”), would live by the *Bhagavad-gītā* and preach its message to the world. Praising Mahatma Gandhi for his Vaiṣṇava qualities, Abhay suggested that Gandhi had also esteemed the *Gītā-nāgarī* concept. It was the only way of relief from the sufferings caused by “demoniac-principled leaders” who were misguiding the present demoralized civilization.

He was calculating how to capture the restless popular imagination. He wanted to present Kṛṣṇa's teachings in a clear, straightforward way and distribute them widely; he felt that good arguments from authoritative scripture would appeal to sane, impartial, educated people, even though they claimed to be uninterested. He knew that somehow, without abandoning his gravity and his absolute conclusion, he must capture their interest. They were relegating religion to some book of scripture on the shelf that they never read, didn't understand, or couldn't believe; he brought it to them as a newspaper—yet it was as good as the scriptures. No, it wasn't what they expected in a newspaper, but they might read it.

The chanting process of the Holy Name of God as conducted by the propaganda of "Back to Godhead" is not pleasing to the superficial pleasure-hunters describing men and women in indecent literatures in national news, but it is the means of relishing the transcendental eternal life.

In addition to selling *Back to Godhead* at tea stalls and delivering copies to donors, Abhay also mailed out free copies—both within India and abroad. For years, the vast audience of English-speaking readers outside India had concerned him, and he wanted to reach them. Having gathered addresses of libraries, universities, and cultural and governmental outlets outside India, he mailed as many *Back to Godheads* as he could afford. He prepared a letter for his Western readers, suggesting that they should be even more receptive than his countrymen.

Although the messages contained in . . . BACK TO GODHEAD are all gifts of the ancient sages of India who actually realised the Absolute Truth, yet at the present moment the so-called leaders of India are too much enamoured by the western way of material advancement of knowledge. They are completely neglecting the treasure house of knowledge left by the sages.

You gentlemen of the western countries have seen much about material science and yet peace is not within your control. In most cases you may be feeling the want of peace although you have enough [materially]. This basic defect of materialism remains undetected by the misleaders of India

and therefore they are not serious about going BACK TO GODHEAD, the ultimate aim of life's journey.

On the home front, Abhay sent copies of his latest issues of *Back to Godhead* to the president of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, along with a letter warning of the perilous fate that awaits a society conducted by *asuras*—"Please therefore save them from the great fall down." Abhay's letter of November 21 was outspoken.

I have got the clue of going "Back to Godhead" just after leaving my present material body, and in order to take along with me all my contemporary men and women of the world, I have started my paper, "Back to Godhead," as one of the means to the way. Please don't think of me as . . . something wonderful or a madman when I say that I shall go "Back to Godhead" after leaving my present material body! It is quite possible for everyone and all of us.

Abhay requested His Excellency at least to glance over the headlines of the enclosed one dozen copies of *Back to Godhead* and consider granting the editor an interview. There was immense work to be done on behalf of India's spiritual heritage, and there should be a specific ministry of spiritual affairs for this purpose. "I am crying alone in the wilderness at the present moment," wrote Abhay. But His Excellency never replied.

In his *Back to Godhead*, Abhay was making propaganda against the atheistic view. In "Hope Against Hope," he frankly admitted that eighty percent of the people he met while selling *Back to Godhead* were atheists.

Sometime we meet gentlemen of up-to-date taste and try to make them interested in the matter of "Back to Godhead." . . . they say very frankly that they have not only no interest in such theistic subject but also they condemn the attempt to bring back people in general to the path of 'Back to Godhead.'

According to these gentlemen, economic conditions of the Indian people deteriorated on account of their too much faith in God and the sooner they

forget everything about Godhead, it is better for them. But we cannot agree with this atheistic conclusion of such up-to-date gentlemen devoid of the sense of Godhead.

Abhay argued that although independent India was now educating her citizens in godless materialism, her economic conditions were not improving. Many Indians did not even have the bare necessities of life. He cited that 120,000 were unemployed in Delhi.

Some of the well posted Government servants or some of the fortunate businessmen may feel themselves happy but 90 per cent of their brother citizens do not know how to meet the both ends together and therefore the economic condition is definitely not satisfactory.

He quoted former United States President Harry S. Truman as saying that national independence means that the citizens should have a comfortable life. So if that were the case, said Abhay, where was India's independence? His point was that all attempts at happiness and prosperity are unlawful as long as they fail to recognize the proprietorship of the Supreme Lord. An atheistic civilization could never produce peace.

In "Progressive Ambition and Unsatiated Lust," Abhay wrote:

There is no dearth of money but there is dearth of peace in the world. The whole human energy having been diverted to this money making business, it has certainly increased the cheap money making capacity of the total population but the result is that such unrestricted and unlawful inflation of money has created a bad economy and has enabled us to manufacture huge costly weapons for destroying the result of such cheap money making business. The authorities of big money making countries, instead of enjoying peace, are now engaged in making important plans as to how they can save themselves from the modern destructive weapons and as a matter of fact a huge sum of money is being thrown into the sea for making an experiment on such dreadful weapons. Such experiments are being carried out not only at huge costs but also at cost of many poor lives, binding thereby such nations in the laws of Karma.

Those who unlawfully accumulated money would find it snatched away by taxes for wars and other "agents of illusory nature in the shape of

medical practitioners, lawyers, tax collectors, societies, constitutions, so-called Sadhus, famines, earthquake and many such calamities.”

A miser who hesitated to purchase a copy of ‘Back to Godhead’ by the dictation of illusory nature spent up Rs. 20,000/- for a week’s ailments and died at the end. A similar thing happened when a man who refused to spend a paisa for the service of the Lord spoiled Rs. 30,000/- in litigation affairs between members of the home. That is the law of nature.

A worker in a New Delhi post office, noticing the title of the magazines Abhay was sending abroad, took the opportunity to argue his atheistic opinions with Abhay.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *The postmaster was an Ārya Samājī, and he was talking to me about the paper, Back to Godhead. He raised the question, “If we do our duty nicely, then what is the use of worshipping God? If we become honest, if we become moral, if we do not do anything which is harmful to anyone, if we act in this way, then what is the need of this?” Because our paper’s name was Back to Godhead, he was indirectly protesting, “What is the use of propagating this philosophy of Godhead if we act nicely?” That is the Ārya Samājī’s view—how to avoid God.*

So I replied that if one is not God conscious, he cannot be a moralist, he cannot be truthful, he cannot be honest—this is our point of view. You study the whole world just on these three points—morality, honesty, dutifulness—but if he is not God conscious, he cannot continue such things. To revive all these good qualities in society, you first have to invoke God consciousness.

A Delhi man, noticing Abhay distributing *Back to Godhead*, remarked, “Where is Godhead? Can you show me God?” Abhay replied to the challenge, but he also pondered a deeper reply as he moved throughout the city during the day. On returning to his room, he began an article, “Where Is Godhead? Is It Possible to See Him?”

In the Secretariat Buildings in New Delhi there is an inscription on the stone that Liberty does not descend upon a people but it has to be earned before it can be enjoyed. Actually this is the fact and we have seen it that much sacrifice had to be rendered by the people of India before they could gain Swaraj. But in the matter of Godhead some irresponsible people ask, “Where is God?” “Can you show me?” “Have you seen God?” These are some of the questions put forward by some irresponsible men who want to

have everything very cheap. If for attaining a temporary false sense of liberty in this material world so much labour and sacrifice have to be requisitioned, is it possible to see Godhead The Absolute Truth so cheaply? To see God means complete liberty from all conditions. But is Godhead an attending orderly so that He may be present at my command? The atheist however demands like that, as if Godhead is his paid servant, and he thinks that Godhead is an imaginary thing otherwise He would have appeared before us as soon as the demand to see Him is made.

One time, while he was walking on a secluded street, pursuing his *Back to Godhead* duties, a stray cow—the kind commonly seen wandering the streets of any Indian town or city—suddenly charged him, goring his side with her horn, and knocked him down. At first he couldn't get up, and no one came to help him. As he lay there, he wondered why it had happened.

Summer came, and the 110-degree heat made it almost intolerable to spend time out of doors. Hot, dust-laden winds blew in the city streets. Streetside hawkers closed their businesses during the day. In early May, during 112-degree heat, a man collapsed in the street and died of heatstroke. But Abhay ignored the heat and the ordinary limitations of the body.

One day while delivering *Back to Godhead* to various addresses in the city, Abhay suddenly began reeling, half unconscious, overcome by the heat. At that very moment, an acquaintance of his, a man he had approached during his preaching, happened to be passing by in his car, and he took Abhay to a doctor. The doctor diagnosed him as a victim of heatstroke and ordered him to rest.

On June 20, Abhay produced the eighth consecutive fortnightly edition of the year, its front-page article condemning both materialistic family life and false renunciation of family life. It had been almost two years exactly since he had left his home and taken to the *vānaprastha* order, and his comments on family life seemed autobiographical as well as scriptural. He quoted a statement by Prahlaḍa Mahārāja from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Persons who are always disturbed in mind with cares and anxieties of household affairs may quit off the place which is the black hole temporary abode [family life] to kill one's self and take shelter unto the lotus feet of the Personality of Godhead by entering into the forest.

And he admitted, “The management of a family is more difficult than that of an empire.”

But trying to avoid family life by living in the jungle without the real spirit of renunciation was “monkey renunciation.” In the jungle there were many monkeys, who lived naked, ate fruits, and kept female companions.

The real remedy lies in the act of accepting the service of the lotus feet of the Lord. That makes one free from all cares and anxieties of life. That makes one able to see Godhead always and everywhere.

Real renounced life, therefore, was possible without going into the forest. Even if one remained in the dress of a householder, he could be freed from cares and anxieties by engaging himself in devotional service.

On September 1, U.S. President Eisenhower condemned the Soviet's secret testing of a nuclear bomb equal to one million tons of TNT and scoffed at the Soviet's claims for peace. In the Mideast, Egypt's Nasser nationalized the operation of the Suez Canal, causing an international crisis. On September 20, eighty-one nations met at the U.N. to form a new international agency to help “tame” the atom for peaceful purposes. Abhay saw some of the headlines and heard talk of the latest news from gentlemen he visited. He frankly told them that without Kṛṣṇa consciousness the promises of cooperation by the politicians were all phantasmagoria.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had said that if only one soul could be turned into a pure devotee, his mission would be a success. Yet sometimes Abhay became overwhelmed when he thought of how small he was, how much work had to be done on behalf of Kṛṣṇa, and how difficult it was to convince even one conditioned soul.



CHAPTER NINE

A Resident of Vṛndāvana

I was sitting alone in Vṛndāvana, writing. My Godbrother insisted to me, "Bhaktivedanta Prabhu, you must do it. Without accepting the renounced order of life, nobody can become a preacher." So he insisted. Not he insisted; practically my spiritual master insisted. He wanted me to become a preacher, so he forced me through this Godbrother: "You accept." So, unwillingly I accepted.

—Śrīla Prabhupāda

The passenger cars behind the locomotive moved forward almost silently. Thumping at a slow rhythm over the tracks, the train pulled out of the station—past freightyards, a neighborhood of run-down tenements, the old Delhi fort, the garbage dump at Nizamuddin with its hundreds of crows and vultures flying overhead, and then past a marble-domed red sandstone mosque. Seated in a third-class compartment, his luggage stored beneath his seat, Abhay could see factory workers walking near the tracks, carrying their lunches in metal *tiffins*, and then the factories, surrounded by huts of mud and straw. He passed the thatched roofs and tarpaulin tents, the cow-dung fires that smoked in the morning air. The tall stacks of the Indraprastha electrical powerhouse spewed out a different smoke, and sooty black clouds poured back from the locomotive. He saw red and violet wildflowers blooming from bramble bushes at

trackside, and beyond he saw the road to Mathurā, with its border of fruitless *kīkar* trees.

It was the morning train to Agra, and there were few passengers. Abhay would be riding as far as Mathurā and then traveling by *tāngā* to Vṛndāvana. He had ridden widely the Indian railway, especially in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s, when he had traveled on business in Bengal, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh.

He had been to Vṛndāvana several times. In his childhood reveries over the train timetables, it had been the first place he had thought of visiting. His first visit, in 1925, had been but a brief pilgrimage while he had been in nearby Agra on business. Then in 1932 Śrīla Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī had been in Vṛndāvana on *parikrama*. That had been a memorable visit; Abhay had heard him speak at Kosi, and Śrīla Bhakti-siddhānta had marked him—"He likes to hear." And then at Rādhā-kuṇḍa three years later he had been with his spiritual master again. But he had never gone like this—to live there. Dressed in a simple white *dhotī*, his hand in his bead bag, fingering his *japa* beads, he looked out the window, quietly chanting the holy name.

The train passed through the dense thickets of Faridabad and into the agricultural fields, with their interspersed patches of wheat, *dāl*, and sugarcane beginning at trackside and stretching for half a mile to the dry, uncultivated land that continued as far as the eye could see. The train sped faster. Rural villages drifted past the window. An hour out of Delhi, the land was mostly flat and open, dotted with small villages. Occasionally he would glimpse a striking old temple. But mostly it was the land—now barren, with a few palm trees, now cultivated with irrigated fields—under the expanse of blue sky and blazing sun.

For a long time Abhay had wanted to take shelter in Vṛndāvana, and now there was no obstacle. His purpose remained the same: he would write *Back to Godhead* and deliver it to the printer in Delhi fortnightly. As long as he could afford to travel, he would return to Delhi to distribute *Back to Godhead*. But he would live in the shelter of Vṛndāvana. He had in mind the room at the Vamśī-gopālajī temple near Keśi-ghāṭa, a rooftop room that commanded a view of almost all of Vṛndāvana. And since his 1953 visit from Jhansi, he had kept in touch with the temple manager.

In moving to Vṛndāvana, Abhay was following his predecessor spiri-

tual masters. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had had their house at Rādhā-kuṇḍa and had preached in Vṛndāvana. Gaurakīśora dāsa Bābāji, Jagannātha dāsa Bābāji, Viśvanātha Cakravartī, and Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura had lived either in Vṛndāvana or in Navadvīpa, near the birthplace of Lord Caitanya.

Lord Caitanya and His immediate followers had an especially intimate relationship with Vṛndāvana. Lord Caitanya had commissioned Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī to uncover the places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Vṛndāvana that over the centuries had become lost. Rūpa and Sanātana had left their prestigious government posts and gone to live in Vṛndāvana. Dressed in simple loincloths, they had lived without fixed residence, staying each night under a different tree. They and Jīva Gosvāmī, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, and Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, known and worshiped as the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana, had compiled a voluminous literature on *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. They had inspired wealthy Vaiṣṇava patrons to erect Vṛndāvana's great temples: Govindajī, Madana-mohana, Rādhā-Dāmodara, Rādhā-ramaṇa. At Rādhā-kuṇḍa, shortly after Lord Caitanya's departure from the world, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī had chanted one hundred thousand names of Kṛṣṇa and discoursed for several hours daily on the pastimes of Lord Caitanya. There also, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja had compiled the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, describing the life and teachings of Lord Caitanya.

Even those Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas who did not live in Vṛndāvana kept Vṛndāvana always in their hearts and proclaimed its glories. The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* describes the great ecstasy Lord Caitanya felt while traveling from Purī to Vṛndāvana: "Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mind was absorbed in ecstatic love at Jagannātha Purī, but when He passed along the road on the way to Vṛndāvana, that love increased a hundred times. The Lord's ecstatic love increased a thousand times when He visited Mathurā, but it increased a hundred thousand times when He wandered in the forests of Vṛndāvana. When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was elsewhere, the very name of Vṛndāvana was sufficient to increase His ecstatic love. Now when He was actually traveling in the Vṛndāvana forest, His mind was absorbed in great ecstatic love day and night. He ate and bathed simply out of habit."

Vṛndāvana is the earthly manifestation of Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal spiritual abode, which the Lord Himself describes in *Bhagavad-gītā*: "There

is another nature, which is eternal and is transcendental to manifested and unmanifested matter. It is never annihilated. It is the supreme destination. When one goes there, he never comes back. That is My supreme abode." Kṛṣṇa's activities of eternity, bliss, and knowledge and His abode, Goloka Vṛndāvana, are described in many Vedic literatures: "I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, the first progenitor, who is tending the cows, yielding all desires, in abodes built with spiritual gems, where He is surrounded by millions of purpose trees and always served with great reverence and affection by hundreds and thousands of Lakṣmīs, or *gopīs*."

Although Lord Kṛṣṇa's abode, Goloka Vṛndāvana, is far beyond the material world, when Kṛṣṇa comes to earth He displays His eternal abode in the Vṛndāvana of India. That eighty-four-square-mile tract in north India is identical with the eternal world in the spiritual sky.

To live and die in Vṛndāvana guarantees the devotee's transfer to the eternal spiritual world. The residents of Vṛndāvana, even the animals, are exalted; at the end of life they will transfer to Goloka Vṛndāvana. Lord Brahmā, therefore, prayed that he might take birth as a clump of grass on the outskirts of Vṛndāvana so that these pure devotees would purify him with the dust from their feet. And Vaiṣṇava *śāstras* declare that even by only a brief visit to Vṛndāvana one can realize the Supreme Lord in his heart.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta states, "Like the transcendental body of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Gokula is all-pervading, infinite, and supreme. It expands both above and below, without any restriction. That abode is manifested within the material world by the will of Lord Kṛṣṇa. It is identical to that original Gokula; they are not two different bodies. The land there is touchstone [*cintāmaṇi*], and the forests abound with desire trees, although material eyes see it as an ordinary place. . . . The ideal place to execute Kṛṣṇa consciousness is Vrajabhūmi, or Vṛndāvana, where people are naturally inclined to love Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa is naturally inclined to love them."

The train arrived at Mathurā. Abhay stepped down with his luggage and looked around, noting the recently constructed Mathurā Junction Building. Proceeding through the gate and out of the station, he found a

ṭāṅgā driver, agreed on the fare, and started for Keśi-ghāṭa.

For half a mile the wobbling horse-drawn cart followed the road between the tracks and the railway yard. At the main road, they turned left, passed under a railroad bridge, and entered an open market. Piles of fruits, vegetables, and grains were displayed on the ground, their vendors sitting beside them, bartering and measuring while customers milled about. The women of Mathurā, dressed in brightly colored *sāris*—yellows, greens, pinks, and purples—moved busily in the market. The vehicular traffic consisted mostly of bullock carts, the drivers often squatting on the wooden yokes between the shoulders of their animals, whipping alternately one ox and then the other with a length of rope joined to a wooden handle. Although this was the most populated area in the trip to Vṛndāvana, compared to Delhi it seemed simple and rural.

The sun was high, but the *ṭāṅgā*'s top provided a partial shelter, and the summer's heat had passed. Beyond the bazaar the road curved to the right, and Abhay saw the nearby white domes of the massive sandstone mosque marking Kṛṣṇa-janmāsthāna, the birthplace of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Centuries ago, invading Muslims had destroyed the large Kṛṣṇa temple and created the mosque in its stead, and now directly in front of the mosque stood a newer, smaller Kṛṣṇa temple.

They approached the three-way junction: New Delhi, central Mathurā, Vṛndāvana. The driver struck the horse with his whip, and the *ṭāṅgā* proceeded along the Vṛndāvana road, edging through a herd of white cows, the herdsman walking amongst them, carrying his stick. The road was busy with *ṭāṅgās* and slow, creaking oxcarts, loaded with market commodities and pulled by squat, black water buffalo. A string of small, spindle-legged donkeys carried oversized loads of firewood and sandbags.

Although much had changed in Abhay's life since he had come here to see his spiritual master during the *parikrama* years ago, Vṛndāvana had remained the same. He felt he had done the best thing in coming here, leaving the heat, the traffic and fumes, the human passions of Delhi. It was a natural relief. Yet even as he felt transcendental emotions for Vṛndāvana, impressions of his months of preaching in Delhi lingered in his mind—the city streets, and himself, going from place to place with his *Back to Godheads*. Life in Delhi had been constant, vigorous preaching. Now he was more than sixty years old, but he was not coming to Vṛndāvana to retire. He had retired from household responsibilities, but

not from his responsibilities of making *Back to Godhead* as popular and sophisticated as *Illustrated Weekly*. He would live in Vṛndāvana and commute to Delhi. But he would never stop preaching.

The sight of taller trees signaled the precincts of Vṛndāvana, as the thin horse trotted along, past the police station and water trough for animals. On either side appeared the garden courtyards of private estates and āśramas. Fragile white *mālatī* flowers, golden marigolds, frangipani trees, red hibiscus, “trees of sorrow,” and many other flowers and trees, some known only in Vṛndāvana, bloomed forth in the brilliant sunlight. The Rādhā-Govinda temple loomed fortresslike on his left, and opposite, in the distance, the high-rising tower of the Raṅganātha temple. They entered narrow streets, tighter and busier places with markets and city dwellings, and then it became quieter again. At the end of a narrow street, by the Yamunā River, near the Keśī bathing *ghāṭa*, stood the small and beautifully ornate entrance of the Vāmśī-gopālajī temple, a narrow three-storied building with three domes and many decorated arches.

After stepping over the curbside drain and walking up three marble steps, Abhay entered the front door, the driver following him, carrying the luggage. Once inside, Abhay removed his shoes and entered the courtyard, which was open to the sky through a metal grate, on which a few birds sat two floors above. A column of sunlight lit one side of the courtyard, where a potted *tulasī* sat atop a pillar. The temple seemed cool and quiet. Adjacent to the courtyard was the Deity room, its doors locked shut. Overhead was a mezzanine with rooms whose entrances were visible from the courtyard; a few *sārīs* and strips of cloth hung on improvised clotheslines.

Mahant Gopal, the temple *pūjārī*, whom Abhay had known since 1954, greeted him cheerfully. He was about the same age as Abhay and had long gray hair and an unruly beard. Although Abhay’s attire was modest, he appeared well dressed compared with Gopal, who wore only a coarse *dhotī*.

Gopal led Abhay upstairs. Coming out onto the roof, Abhay smiled to see again the wonderful vista. Barely a hundred yards away he could see the Yamunā, not only the immediate patch of water flowing before him, but to his left and right a broad curving sheet of river shimmering in the afternoon sun. There were sand deltas, herds of cows and buffalo grazing, the flat grassy banks of the Yamunā, and plains and trees as far as

the eye could see. And in the opposite direction was the town of Vṛndāvana, marked by dozens of temple spires and domes.

Abhay's room, the only one on the roof, was small, with narrow double doors and barred windows. Sitting on the apartment's roof, monkeys with their tiny offspring sat watching, unalarmed. Just outside the door, a two-foot-high cement pyramid signified that the temple Deity was directly beneath. Abhay entered the room. Through the barred windows he could see the palace at Keśi-ghāṭa, the venerable tower of the Gopīnātha temple, and, beyond, the uninterrupted, flat river, the green banks, and the sky.

After acquainting Abhay with the details of the room—the small kerosene burner, the rope and bucket for drawing bathwater from the well to the roof—Gopal meticulously produced a government-stamped rental agreement. Abhay wrote a short paragraph, declaring himself a disciple of the late Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda and attesting to his renting the room at five rupees per month. Both parties signed.

After his bath, Abhay took *prasādam* and rested. When he heard the bells ringing in the temple below, he went down to see the Deities. Gopal, who had been the temple's *pūjārī* for many years and had seen its reconstruction in 1923, had told Abhay that the temple Deity, Vamśi-gopālajī, had been installed 350 years before by Mahant Prahlāda dāsa of the Nimbārka Vaiṣṇava-sampradāya. Gopal himself had installed the Deity of Rādhārāṇī. Vamśi-gopālajī, standing in a graceful threefold-bending form and holding His flute, was very appealing. He was three feet tall and of black marble; Rādhārāṇī, slightly shorter, was of brass. They were simply dressed in rough white cotton and illuminated by the dim glow of a kerosene lamp. Abhay could see that They were being cared for, but because of poverty there was no opulence.

He returned to the roof as the sun was setting over the town of Vṛndāvana. Having the entire roof's walkway to himself, Abhay walked and chanted *japa*, enjoying the cooling early-evening breeze from the Yamunā. Occasionally a solitary boat would pass on the calm waters of the Yamunā, and a devotee, somewhere unseen, could be heard chanting evening prayers at Keśi-ghāṭa. He felt pleased with this location in the

heart of the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He was not a newcomer spending his first day in a strange town; everything here was already familiar and dear. As Vṛndāvana was Kṛṣṇa's abode, Abhay was Kṛṣṇa's servant, the servant of the six Gosvāmīs, the servant of his spiritual master. He felt at home.

As day turned to twilight, temple bells rang throughout the town. Abhay walked to the western side of the roof and looked into the city of thousands of temples. The Govindajī temple, the Raṅganātha temple, and thousands of smaller temples were having their *sandhyā-ārati* and *kīrtana*, glorifying Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Abhay responded to the sights and sounds of Vṛndāvana as only a pure devotee could; his thoughts and emotions were full of appreciation and awareness of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa's devotees, and Kṛṣṇa's land. Naturally he began to think of preaching, hankering for others to know the intimate peace and ecstasy of Vṛndāvana. Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, was inviting all souls to join Him in His eternal abode; yet even in India, few understood. And outside India, people knew nothing of Vṛndāvana or of the Yamunā or of what it means to be free of material desires. Why shouldn't people all around the world have this? This was the abode of peace, yet no one knew anything of it, nor were people interested. But this is what they were actually hankering for.

Abhay thought of *Back to Godhead* and how, by Kṛṣṇa's grace, he might expand his preaching beyond India to the whole world. His Godbrothers... it would have been better if they had all worked together in the Gaudiya Math, but many of them were at least keeping the regulative principles. None of them, however, seemed to be doing much beyond maintaining a temple here, an *āśrama* there, worshipping a Deity, eating and sleeping. But there was so much more to be done in broadcasting the glories of Vṛndāvana. Abhay chanted and thought of Kṛṣṇa. Gradually he turned to his task of producing the October issue of *Back to Godhead*, due to be printed shortly in Delhi. He had a deadline to keep.

The next morning, before sunrise, the residents of Vṛndāvana were astir, bathing in the Yamunā, performing *pūjā* to their Deities, reciting *mantras*. But Abhay was awake even before most, writing in stillness beneath the light in his rooftop room. As he wrote diligently in English, scriptural references appeared and took their place within convincing

arguments. For hours he wrote, page after page in an exercise book, until gradually the chirping of awakening birds signaled the end of the dark night's stillness. Soon the sun would rise.

Keeping to his regular schedule, he put aside his writing and began chanting *japa*, staying in his room, uttering the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* in a soft, deep voice. Even before the first traces of light in the sky, before the river was visible, a few *bābājīs* reciting prayers made their way through the streets, heading for the Yamunā. By 4:00 A.M., gongs and temple bells throughout the city heralded the *maṅgala-ārati* of the Deity. Abhay continued chanting alone for another hour. Then he prepared to bathe, lowering the bucket on its long rope and hauling water up to the rooftop.

It was light when he went out, his bead bag around his neck, a few copies of *Back to Godhead* in his hand. Turning right at the temple door, he walked the tight, crooked lane, past alleys, dirt paths, and cross lanes, which interlaced in a winding network. There were no shops in the area, only silent buildings, many of them hundreds of years old. The neighborhood was serene. Behind closed shutters, someone played on wooden clackers and sang Hare Kṛṣṇa softly. At a crossroads where dark women filled brass waterpots from a well, Abhay turned left onto a street lined with small, open porches. On either side he saw ornate temple architecture: one entrance marked by two stone lions, another by a carved elephant with teeth like a tiger's. A brick-and-mortar wall was crumbling with age.

Soon Abhay arrived at the Rādhā-ramaṇa temple, established almost five hundred years before by Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, one of Lord Caitanya's chief followers. Here residents of Vṛndāvana were coming and going according to their vows, following a strict schedule that allowed not a moment's delay, making their daily visit to various temples. Abhay entered and stood amidst a group of worshipers, viewing the Deity of Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā-ramaṇa. The Deity, wearing a fresh garland of flowers, His enchanting black form adorned with bright silks and jewels, appeared very opulent.

Knowing the priests of Rādhā-ramaṇa to be respected, learned Sanskritists, some of whom also read English, Abhay had brought with him a few copies of *Back to Godhead*. He met Viśvambhara Gosvāmī, a young priest in his thirties who after the death of his father had left his

law practice and taken over some of the temple management. The temple was run under a “caste *gosvāmī*” system, and thus for five hundred years Viśvambhara’s ancestors had handed down charge of the temple. Although Viśvambhara had met many *sādhus*, he was immediately struck by Abhay’s gentle and humble demeanor. He accepted the copies of *Back to Godhead* and sat and talked with Abhay.

Abhay then continued along Vṛndāvana’s winding lanes to visit another temple, Rādhā-Dāmodara. He passed old *bābājīs* and women carrying water, a commercial shop beside an open porch where people worshiped a Śiva *linga*. Monkeys sitting atop a high concrete wall and ranging from roof to roof, ledge to ledge, chattered and gestured as Abhay walked beneath. As the morning progressed, barefoot children had begun to appear more frequently, playing within the open doorways. As he walked along chanting *japa*, his right hand in his bead bag, his lips moving softly, hardly anyone in Vṛndāvana knew him. But as an elderly, cultured Bengali gentleman, he did not seem an unusual sight; he was a religious *bābū* in a town devoted entirely to religion.

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Abhay would regularly visit Vṛndāvana’s important temples, and afterwards he would shop, returning to his room around eleven with vegetables for cooking. Using the kerosene burner and a three-tiered cooker, he would cook rice, potatoes, and sometimes *sabji*. He would also cook *capātīs*. He would take only one meal a day, at noon, and in the evening a cup of milk. When he did not have time to cook, he would take the *prasādam* of the Deity. After lunch he would nap for fifteen minutes and then write. He rarely received visitors, but stayed alone, writing.

Just before sunset, he would again go out visiting temples. At Keśi-ghāṭa he would pass by *sādhus* sitting alone here and there, facing the Yamunā. The river itself was little trafficked, sometimes a boat or two slowly moving on the river’s placidity. Sometimes a fish splashed in the water, or a bird winged along the river, watchful. Keśi-ghāṭa was quiet and beautiful, especially after the sun had relented for the day. *Sādhus* would hail Abhay on sight with Vṛndāvana’s common greeting, “Jaya Rādhē!” and Abhay would return his “Hare Kṛṣṇa!”

When in the evening he walked through town, he would find himself

amidst the vibrations of one *kīrtana* after another. In the temples of Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, Caitanya, Nṛsimha, or Śiva, in *āśrama* halls, in homes, even amongst groups walking on the streets, there would be *kīrtana*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. He would often see Bengali widows gathered together in a hall. Thousands of them lived in *āśramas* in Vṛndāvana, staying together with few wants, wearing dull white *sāris*, keeping their hair cut short, never leaving Vṛndāvana even for Mathurā, wanting only to stay in Vṛndāvana, to die in Vṛndāvana chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. A man would sit playing *mṛdaṅga* and leading a chant while a group of widows clapped their hands unevenly, responding in their childlike voices. The drum, the clapping, the singers—unpolished but earnest—made a sweet sound in the evening. As Abhay walked, no sooner would the sound of one *kīrtana* fade than another would rise loudly before him and then fade behind him as another rose to meet him, a temple bell ringing formidably, intermingling with the drums, cymbals, and chorus of another group or a single person passing nearby singing his own “Rādhe, Rādhe.”

Even the greetings were *kīrtana*: “Jaya Rādhe!” “Haribol!” As faces passed, as carts clattered by, as men joked or made their last transaction of the day in the market, and as stray cows made their way home, their bells clanging around their necks, somehow everything was in connection with Kṛṣṇa. And as Abhay returned to the secluded Vamśī-gopālajī temple, there also he would hear *kīrtanas*, only more private, perhaps only a husband and wife in their room, the man playing *mṛdaṅga* and singing one line of a *bhajana*, his wife singing in response. Vṛndāvana was not ordinary. Every singer sounded sweet, in his own way an expert melodist, and everyone sang of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa was present in every occasion and event.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *The glories of Kṛṣṇa nobody can understand. Similarly, Vṛndāvana. The land which is known as Vṛndāvana also has unlimited potency. When you go to Vṛndāvana, you will find unlimited potency of spiritual atmosphere, still. If you go to Vṛndāvana, you will see so many saints and sages—still they are worshiping Vṛndāvana-dhāma. As Lord Kṛṣṇa is worshipable, similarly His place, Vṛndāvana, is as good as Kṛṣṇa. It is also worshipable.*

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Commuting became difficult. He would take the morning train into Delhi and, having nowhere to stay, return to Vṛndāvana the same night. That didn't give him much time in Delhi, and it was expensive. At first he had stayed with Mr. Gupta, a pious gentleman who studied the *Gītā* regularly and afforded *sādhus* a place to stay. Abhay had explained to Mr. Gupta about his *Back to Godhead* and his desires to preach in the West. It had been a good arrangement, and Abhay had kept to himself, writing. But in time another *sādhū* took the room.

Even with his minimal personal expenses, it was difficult to raise enough in donations to cover traveling, printing, and mailing. Giving copies of *Back to Godhead* away wasn't difficult, and he was doing that in Vṛndāvana. But working alone—writing, editing, selling, soliciting donations—was too much. The printer, Mr. Jain, was amazed, wondering why a person would put himself through such difficulties, printing a newspaper he couldn't afford.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *I worked for Back to Godhead day and night. In the beginning, when I was a householder, I did not care if somebody paid or not paid. I used to distribute liberally. But when I left my household life and I was living alone, sometimes in Vṛndāvana and sometimes in Delhi, or sometimes traveling for pushing on BTG—they were very hard days.*

After his twelfth consecutive fortnightly edition, the issue for November 20, 1956, Abhay ran out of money. Mr. Jain had to throw up his hands, saying he couldn't print simply out of friendship. Abhay returned to Vṛndāvana, where he spent his time writing but with no plan for publication.

It was because people weren't interested in becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious—because they had “no time”—that *Back to Godhead* had failed financially. Certain *sādhus* in India were celebrated and influential, but Abhay was not amongst them. Of course, the uncompromising preaching he had learned from his spiritual master, the “chopping technique” in which he openly criticized revered politicians and holy men, was not likely to win him favor and patronage. “Don't flatter,” Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had said. “Speak the truth. And if Kṛṣṇa is pleased, then you will come out successful. Money will come.” And Abhay had firm faith in this.

That was his outstanding asset—his faith in his spiritual master. He was sure that by following Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, he would

receive his blessings and the blessings of Lord Caitanya. Although for the last two years he had followed any path that had opened as far as it had led, he had remained one-pointed, aimed at serving the order of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. He was confident. Sooner or later he would obtain substantial backing, he would find a sympathetic audience, sincere workers would join him.

A letter came to Abhay in Vṛndāvana from his disciple, Ācārya Prabhākar Misra, and it gave Abhay an idea. Ācārya Prabhākar, who was in Bombay working as secretary of the Sanskrit Department at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, invited Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Prabhū to join him there for preaching together, just as in the old days. The founder-director of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan was Governor K. M. Munshi (the same governor whose wife had pressured Abhay to give up the Radha Memorial in Jhansi). But Ācārya Prabhākar, having recently established a friendship with the governor, intimated to Abhay that the governor might be willing to help. Thus in January 1957, after assuring Mahant Gopal that he would return and that he would send five rupees a month for his room, Abhay traveled to Bombay.

Ācārya Prabhākar got Abhay quarters in the faculty residence and introduced him to various scholars and religionists. They then attended a lecture by Governor Munshi, "What Is Wrong With the World?" Afterwards, Abhay approached the governor, expressing his appreciation of the speech, but stressing that it would take a *spiritual* movement to avert the imminent global disasters. Without God consciousness, even Mr. Munshi's work in the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan would be a waste of time. Abhay spoke of his interest in reviving the League of Devotees, and he suggested how he might work within the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan to infuse the life of God consciousness into the governor's cultural projects. Governor Munshi responded by offering Abhay a post as Honorary Professor of *Bhagavad-gītā*. Abhay accepted and gave the governor some copies of *Back to Godhead*, requesting that he read them in his spare time.

As Honorary Professor of *Bhagavad-gītā*, Abhay began each class with Hare Kṛṣṇa *kīrtana* and then lectured on the *Gītā*, presenting Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but he soon found his post confining. Within the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, he found little scope for reviving the League of Devotees.

Then, along with other members of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Abhay attended the fifth annual convention of the World Academy of Sanskrit at Kurukṣetra (where five thousand years before, Lord Kṛṣṇa had spoken *Bhagavad-gītā*). India's president, Dr. Rajendra Prasad; Governor Munshi; and many scholars and *paṇḍitas* from all over India participated in the discourses. But everyone there had his own thing to say, apart from the conclusions of Lord Kṛṣṇa, so Abhay considered the meeting a waste of time. Since he was not scheduled to speak, since the nondevotional discussions on the *Gītā* disturbed him, and since he saw that nothing practical would come of such a theoretical meeting, he left Kurukṣetra and returned to Vṛndāvana.

Ācārya Prabhākar soon joined Abhay. As they talked together in Abhay's room at Vaiṣṇī-gopālajī temple, Abhay spoke again of his desire to revive the League of Devotees. After having recently seen the watered-down cultural programs in Bombay and Kurukṣetra, he felt even more keenly the need for a society of pure devotees. There were already so many cultural and religious organizations; if he liked he could join one. But where was that organization with which he could affiliate himself wholeheartedly? Only the League of Devotees espoused the conclusions of Lord Caitanya and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī: vigorous, worldwide preaching of devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Abhay drafted "An Appeal to the Generous Public, Modern Philosophers, Leaders, and Religionists" on behalf of the League of Devotees. The activities of the League, he stated, would be to publish *Back to Godhead* in English (with translations in many other languages), to educate young men and women for worldwide preaching, and to operate a press solely for printing transcendental literature. These programs would require an estimated three thousand rupees per month, and he appealed for help. Abhay concluded, "Vṛndāvana is the sacred place of topmost importance and the Headquarter of this League is therefore situated here." Using the impressive new titles, Honorary Professor of *Gītā*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, and Honorary Secretary of Hari Bhavan, Abhay, with the assistance of Ācārya Prabhākar, launched another attempt at rallying support for *Back to Godhead* and the League of Devotees.

Within a few days, Ācārya Prabhākar returned to his post in Bombay, and Abhay was again alone in Vṛndāvana. He loved Vṛndāvana, yet with

no means to publish and preach, he was not content there. If he were to travel, he might be able to enlist members for the League. He thought of Kanpur, which was nearby, a city of more than one hundred big factories and many wealthy industrialists, some of whom he had met during his business travels. He decided to go. After printing some League of Devotee membership forms, he explained to Mahant Gopal that he would be away for a couple of months.

The Mahant was surprised. Although most elderly *sādhus* who came to Vṛndāvana stayed put and some even took vows never to leave, this quiet *bābū* was coming and going constantly.

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Abhay preached actively in Kanpur, staying in various homes and canvassing for League members. As the guest of the Anandesvar Satsang Mandal, he lectured regularly at the popular Parmat bathing *ghāṭa* on the Ganges. He especially made acquaintances among industrialists and educators, often sitting and conversing with them for hours, and many were impressed by his dedication and his soft-spoken talks. But his collections were small. When he offered the wealthy magnates his “constitutional membership,” they usually opted in favor of the two-rupees-a-year “subscriber membership.” He collected a few letters of appreciation, but after two months he left.

After some months in Vṛndāvana, Abhay decided to go back to Bombay and preach. In Bombay, he quickly broke off his association with the stifling Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and moved out of the faculty residence there. Staying a week at a time in the homes of various patrons, he tried to generate interest in his missionary activities. When a friend of Ācārya Prabhākar’s arranged for Abhay to address Sunday-evening crowds at a Bombay beach, Abhay accepted. Following already established custom, he sat on a cushion, and the people gathered—from five hundred to a thousand, sitting and listening—as he loudly spoke the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā*. Abhay spoke for several nights. And there were other lecture opportunities also. One week he spoke several times at a Bombay Viṣṇu temple.

But Abhay wanted to do more than deliver occasional lectures to uncommitted audiences. The conviction was growing within him that he should preach outside India. The idea, of course, had been there for some

time. He had expressed it in his prospectus for the League of Devotees, before gatherings at the Radha Memorial in Jhansi, during his meeting at the Birla Mandir in Delhi, and on many other occasions. Informally he had expressed it hundreds of times to acquaintances. And he had woven his dream throughout his writings.

He was ready to travel anywhere if he could fulfill Śrīla Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī's order to preach in English. In India the English-speaking population was small, so Abhay continued to dream of going to the West. If he could travel to Bombay, Delhi, and Kanpur, why not to London or New York, where millions spoke English and had never heard the message of Lord Caitanya? Writing to Mr. Ved Prakash, a Kanpur industrialist, Abhay explained his idea.

Lord Chaitanya said "praninam upakaraya"; i.e. to say, for the benefit of all living being concerned . . . While rendering first aid service in the battlefield the Red Cross men, although equally disposed to all the wounded soldiers, they give first preference to the hopeful ones. *The hopeless ones are sometimes neglected. . . .*

In India, even after the attainment of Swaraj, the mentality is predominately "Made in London" ideas. It is a long story. But in nutshell the leaders of India in the name of secular government they have engaged themselves in everything foreign. They have carefully set aside the treasure house of India's spiritual asset and they are imitating the western material way of life, constantly engaged in the acts of error of judgment, misgivings, imperfectness, and duplicity.

India's Vedic knowledge is above all the conditional defects mentioned above. But we Indians at the present moment have neglected such wonderful Vedic knowledge. It is due to its improper handling. . . .

This Vedānta-sūtra is [presented in India] by *unauthorized persons* of different camps and as such the people are being misguided. Newly sprung up national enthusiasm of the Indian leaders, industrialists, and plan-makers have no time nor the desire to understand the message of *Vedānta-sūtra* or even the Bhagavad-Gītā. You cannot do acts of humanity without proper guidance. . . .

So my idea of preaching in the foreign countries means that they're rather fed up with material advancement of knowledge. They're seeking the message guidance of the Vedānta-sūtra or for that matter the Bhagavad-Gītā in an authentic way. And I am sure India will again go back to the spiritual life when the principle is accepted by the Europeans,

Americans etc. because the Indian people are now in the habit of begging, after neglecting their own property. That was my viewpoint. But all the same we must take only the opportunity of service.

One way of expanding his way of preaching was to mail copies of *Back to Godhead* outside India. And as an incentive for enlisting donors, he made it known that the donor's name would be printed on each copy. His ambition was to bring in large donations, run large printings, and send *Back to Godhead* to more than fifty countries. He assigned quotas: America would receive ten thousand copies, Argentina five hundred, Belgium five hundred, Brazil five hundred, Burma one thousand, Canada five hundred, Chile five hundred, China ten thousand, and so on, including ten thousand for Russia and ten thousand for England. But the donors and donations never appeared, and the plans for *Back to Godhead* were never realized.

Abhay found that while the people of India's educated, cultured class were rejecting their own spiritual culture, the religiously inclined masses were being baffled by an array of conflicting, unauthorized doctrines presented in the name of Hinduism. An alarming example of this came to his attention as he was preaching in Bombay during the summer of 1958. "Bhagwat Week" was being publicized by a group whose teachings conflicted with the pure *paramparā* presentation of the *Bhāgavata*. The *Bhāgavata*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, was the devotional scripture par excellence, the literary incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, yet the organizers of Bhagwat Week were using *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to teach impersonalism and minimize Lord Kṛṣṇa. Through friends, Abhay learned of the outrageous meetings, and finally, on July 28, 1958, he wrote to the Bhagwat Week leader, Sri Ratanshi, imploring him to stay away from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

I beg to inform you that I am in receipt of your invitation letter in the matter of observing Bhagwat week through the secretary of Bombay spiritual Centre. As I know what sort of Bhagwat week can be observed by the Mayavadins for misleading the innocent public and therefore I not only restrained myself from attending the function but also I advised many

others not to attend, for the very reason that the recitation of the holy Bhagwat is being performed by men who have no access in this great scripture, in which only the liberated persons, who are freed from all pretentious religiousities, can take part... Some friends who attended your Bhagwat week have told me how the pastimes of Lord Krishna [were] being wrongly interpreted in your organisation on the pretext of saving Krishna from being an immoral personality. To save these foolish audiences in future, Maharaj Parikshit had already asked Sripad Sukhdeva Goswami to clear the Rasaleela activities of Lord Shri Krishna. The transcendental nature of Rasaleela does not require to be apologised by any Mayavadi or mundane moralist. The Leela is what it is.

In the sloka No. 30 it is forbidden that a mundane person should indulge in hearing Rasaleela or... should hear Rasaleela from a mundane person. In your organisation both the audience and the lecturer are mundane persons and their indulgence in the matter of Rasaleela out of sheer foolishness will result in imitating Rudra, who swallowed up an ocean of poison.

Abhay warned that legal action could be taken against such a religious fraud. But Bhagwat Week continued, and hundreds were cheated.

While the professed followers of Vedic culture were being baffled in their allegiance, modern Westernized Indians were rejecting Vedic culture as backwards and irrelevant. There was Prime Minister Nehru, who wasn't at all spiritually inclined; he was for modernization and for what Abhay called "Made in London" ideas. At least Mahatma Gandhi, although he had never responded to Abhay's letters, had been spiritually inclined. But not so his follower, Pandit Nehru. Still, out of concern for the way India's leaders were rejecting their country's spiritual heritage, Abhay decided to write Pandit Nehru.

Although in Bombay Abhay was practically homeless, in August of 1958 he boldly wrote the prime minister, expressing his conviction that India's spiritual culture must not only be revived at home, but also be distributed to the West. He reminded Pandit Nehru that from ancient Greece down to the atomic age the Western world had seen only materialism and had therefore never known peace. If Nehru were to continue following the path of materialism, the only results would be strife and war.

Therefore, India may not waste her time in imitating the western way of life. You have admitted it that the position of Indian culture is of high order, but at the same time you want to bring in material prosperity by scientific advancement of knowledge. But what is that scientific knowledge? Spiritualism is also advanced scientific knowledge. Material advancement of scientific knowledge cannot give even material prosperity to the people in general. Do you think that horseless carriage, or telephonic or radio communication or any other such ephemeral facilities of life can bring in material prosperity? No it cannot. Material prosperity means the people must have sufficient to eat or to maintain the body very soundly. Do you think that your different plans have brought in that material prosperity or that modern western civilisation can bring in that prosperity? Even they are given that facility, the unrest will continue to go on till there is spiritual satisfaction of life. That is the secret of peace.

Even without having been to the West, Abhay expressed his conviction that the Americans and even the Russians were hankering for spiritual realization; they could not have become satisfied merely with material advancement. Pandit Nehru, therefore, should help his friends in the West by offering them spiritual knowledge from India.

Poverty means poverty of knowledge. Prime Minister Chanakya used to live in a thatched cottage but he was the dictator of India during the time of Chandra Gupta. Mahatma Gandhi voluntarily accepted the way of living of the so-called poor man and was the dictator of Indian destiny. But was he poverty stricken? He was proud of his spiritual knowledge. Therefore spiritual knowledge makes a man really rich man and not the radio set or the motorcar etc.

Back in the 1930s the Nehru family had bought their medicines from Abhay's Prayag Pharmacy, and Abhay now appealed to Pandit Nehru as an old friend from Allahabad. Just as Abhay had requested Mahatma Gandhi, he requested Nehru to leave his political responsibilities "and as a popular gentleman of the world, engage the rest of your life in this organised spiritual movement to make a real adjustment of western material science combined with Indian way of spiritual realisation." As with his letter to Gandhi, his letter to Nehru went unanswered.

Among Abhay's former Bombay contacts was Mr. Harbanslal, a landlord who had once assured Abhay that he would provide him lodging whenever he needed. In the summer of 1958 Abhay went to call on Mr. Harbanslal, only to find that he had gone to the West. When Abhay learned that Mr. Harbanslal was traveling not only on business but on a cultural mission, his imagination seized on the idea of an Indian on a cultural mission in the West. He wrote to Mr. Harbanslal, asking for a place to stay, but also presenting his own cultural mission. Abhay knew that many Westerners respected Indian culture. He had heard from his German Godbrother that although Indians who went to the West, especially to Germany, were well received, they were sometimes tested on their knowledge of Indian culture. So Abhay advised Mr. Harbanslal to teach the real conclusion of Indian culture as he traveled.

I think that people need this Indian message in this hour of necessity when the atomic bomb is hovering over the head of the human society.

... Please therefore begin the activities for the benefit of all people in the foreign countries since you have gone there.

Clearly, Abhay would have liked to have gone himself.

Abhay also reminded Mr. Harbanslal of his promise to provide him with an apartment: "... I am passing my days in Bombay in great inconvenience for want of a suitable residential place." But the letter never caught up with the touring Mr. Harbanslal.

Wanting to go to the West as soon as possible, Abhay visited one of his Godbrothers in Bombay, Kṛpāsindhu, and asked him to help.

Kṛpāsindhu: *He came to my house and asked me to help him in going to America. He gave me some Back to Godheads which he said I could show to people to ask for help on his behalf. I tried to do something in this regard. I introduced Abhay Bābū to one man, a big industrialist, Hemraj Khandelwala. I went also. The three of us sat down, and I told the man how Abhay wanted to go to the West and how he was a good devotee and was writing and doing so many things. But somehow or other the man did not help.*

Kṛpāsindhu told Abhay of how the Gaudiya Math in Bombay had sometimes been assisted by a pious business magnate, Mrs. Sumati Morarji, head of Scindia Steamship Lines. Abhay tried to see her but was

unable. He did, however, see one of Mrs. Morarji's employees, a deputy manager for the Scindia Company, who heard him out and, to Abhay's surprise, responded generously. Considering Abhay a genuine *sādhū*, the Scindia agent offered him a fifty-percent concession on a voyage from India to the United States. He even put it in writing. Abhay immediately began arranging for his passport and visa. But he could not raise even the half fare.

Back in 1956 in Delhi he had been struggling and homeless. And now, as he considered his last two years of traveling out of Vṛndāvana, he felt that his position hadn't really improved; perhaps Kṛṣṇa didn't want him to succeed in this way. But one positive thing he had gained: determination to go to the West and preach. There he would surely meet with success.

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Alone and poor, Abhay returned to Vṛndāvana. He was sixty-two, but he wasn't thinking of retiring. More than ever, his mood was reflective and renounced. Because few people knew him and because he wanted to write, he kept to himself.

He enjoyed deep peace as a resident of Vṛndāvana. Outside his window, the sacred Yamunā flowed by in a peaceful panorama for his private audience. The Keśi-ghāṭa neighborhood was quiet, though in the pre-dawn he could hear a few devotees bathing and chanting. When the moon was full, the river seemed like a coolly resplendent jewel. And in the morning the sun would appear, like a red smudge, a fire burning through an opaque wall, at last bursting forth and clearing the entire sky, until in the hot blaze of noon, while the room would be in shadows, Abhay could see from his window a shimmering sun high in the sky and glittering across the silver sheet of the gentle river. Without so much as leaving his room, from his doorway he could see hundreds of temples clustered together for miles in the friendly town of Vṛndāvana. The various punctual *kīrtanas* and bell-rings in the temples, the spontaneous songs to Lord Kṛṣṇa in numerous homes and in the streets rose and filled the air with devotion.

On the veranda Abhay could chant *japa*, and there would be no interruption. He enjoyed a simple, almost carefree life of minimized physical

wants—a few hours of rest at night, a little *prasādam* at noon, the simplest clothing. And he did not have to flatter anyone, support anyone, or manage anyone's life. His mind and intelligence were free and dwelt constantly on his service to his spiritual master. He saw his present circumstances as a preparation for a greater task before him. Despite his advanced age, he felt that he had barely begun his work. Yet he felt confident. He had his vision of a world association of devotees. It was not an idle dream, although he was not certain how it would all come about. But he knew his duty. For the present he would go on describing his vision, the vision of his predecessor spiritual masters, in articles and books. But as soon as possible he should go to the West. Westerners, he had concluded, were not satisfied with a materially comfortable life devoid of spiritual understanding; more than his fellow Indians, they would be open to the message of the Absolute Truth. He knew he should go. And he would go—if Kṛṣṇa desired.

Abhay lived frugally in Vṛndāvana, keeping exact account of every expenditure and every receipt. He carefully kept a ledger, just as if he were running a substantial business, even though his purchases were only a little milk, a few vegetables, charcoal for cooking, bus rides, and his major expenditure, postage.

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Abhay composed a Bengali poem, “Vṛndāvana-bhajana.” Its opening stanzas were especially self-reflective and personal.

1

I am sitting alone in Vṛndāvana-dhāma.
In this mood I am getting many realizations.

I have my wife, sons, daughters, grandsons, everything,
But I have no money, so they are a fruitless glory.
Kṛṣṇa has shown me the naked form of material nature;
By His strength it has all become tasteless to me today.
Yasyāham anugrṇāmi hariṣye tad-dhanam śanaiḥ:

“I gradually take away all the wealth of those upon whom I am merciful.”
How was I able to understand this mercy of the all-merciful?

2

Everyone has abandoned me, seeing me penniless—
Wife, relatives, friends, brothers, everyone.
This is misery, but it gives me a laugh. I sit alone and laugh.
In this *māyā-saṁsāra*, whom do I really love?
Where have my loving father and mother gone now?
And where are all my elders, who were my own folk?
Who will give me news of them, tell me who?
All that is left of this family life is a list of names.

3

As the froth on the seawater mixes again in the sea,
Māyā-saṁsāra's play is just like that.
No one is mother or father, or personal relative;
Just like the sea foam, they remain but a short time.
Just as the froth on seawater mixes again in the sea,
The body made of five elements meets with destruction.
How many bodies does the embodied soul take in this way?
His relatives are all related merely to the temporal body.

4

But everyone is your relative, brother, on the spiritual platform.
This relationship is not tinged with the smell of *Māyā*.
The Supreme Lord is the soul of everyone.
In relation to Him, everyone in the universe is the same.
All your relatives, brother! All the billions of *jīvas*.
When seen in relation to Kṛṣṇa they are all in harmony.
Forgetting Kṛṣṇa, the *jīva* desires sense gratification,
And as a result he is firmly grasped by *Māyā*. . .

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On an October visit to Delhi, Abhay received a donation from Kaviraj Baidya Nath Sircar, to be used for printing one thousand copies of *Back to Godhead*. Abhay promptly produced an October 20 issue of *Back to Godhead* with the donor's name on the front page. It was the first issue in two years. Another donor, Mr. Subodh Kumar Kapoor of Ramalal Kapoor and Sons, followed Mr. Sircar's example and donated one thousand copies for the November 20 issue.

The front-page article in the November issue was "Truth and Beauty." An editorial in *The Times of India*, speculating on whether truth and beauty were compatible, had opined that truth was not always beautiful but often ugly and unpleasant. Abhay disagreed: "Truth is so beautiful that many sages, saints, and devotees have left everything for the sake of Truth. . . . but we are habituated to love untruth from time immemorial in the name of truth." Abhay agreed, however, that mundane truth and beauty were incompatible. Not only was mundane truth not beautiful; it was not truth. And mundane beauty was not real beauty. To explain, Abhay told a story.

Once a man fell in love with a beautiful girl, who tried to resist the man's advances. When he persisted, she requested that he wait for seven days, after which she would accept him. During the next seven days, the girl took a strong purgative and laxative and repeatedly passed stool and vomited. She stored the refuse in buckets. Thus "the so-called beautiful girl became lean, thin like a skeleton and turned blackish in complexion and the beautiful eye balls were pushed into the sockets of the skull."

The man appeared on the scene well dressed and well behaved and asked the waiting girl, who was depressed in appearance, about the beautiful girl who called him there. The man could not recognise the waiting girl as the same beautiful girl whom he was asking for. The same girl however was in a pitiable condition and the foolish man in spite of repeated assertion could not recognise her. It was all due to the action of the medicine only.

At last the girl told the powerful man all the story of her beauty and told him that she had separated the ingredients of her beauty and stored them up in the reservoirs. She also told him that he could enjoy the juices of beauty stored up in the reservoirs. The mundane poetic or the lunatic man agreed to see the juices of beauty and thus he was directed to the store of loose stool and liquid vomit which were emanating unbearable bad smell and thus the whole story of beauty liquid was disclosed to him.

Abhay went on to assert that literature which did not describe the ultimate truth and beauty of the Supreme Person was no better than stool and vomit, even though it be presented as poetry and philosophy.

In "Standard Morality," Abhay explained, "Morality is the standard of activity by which the Supreme Authority is satisfied." The scriptures

contain moral codes prohibiting unholy sex relations, animal slaughter, intoxication, and gambling. Abhay attributed Mahatma Gandhi's success as a public leader to his observance of these moral principles. Abhay also praised the Vedic system of marriage: "after the attainment of puberty a woman wants a male, and if she is not married within that time and allowed to mix up with boys, . . . it is quite natural that there is every chance of fall down either by the boy or the girl." Despite changing social conditions, Abhay argued, "You cannot indulge in unholy connection with the opposite sex [just] because the social conditions have changed. Because unholy connection with woman is the beginning of all immorality."

In "Scholars Deluded," Abhay presented a critical review of Dr. Radhakrishnan's edition of *Bhagavad-gītā*, citing specifically the thirty-fourth verse of the Ninth Chapter, wherein Lord Kṛṣṇa declares that one should always think of Him and become His devotee. Dr. Radhakrishnan had commented, "It is not the personal Krishna to whom we have to give ourselves up utterly, but the unborn, beginningless eternal who speaks through Krishna." Although the obvious meaning of *Bhagavad-gītā* was that one should surrender to Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Person, impersonalists like Dr. Radhakrishnan obscured the direct meaning with their word jugglery.

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On the disappearance day of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Abhay keenly felt separation from his spiritual master. He perfectly understood that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's instructions were more important than his physical presence and that, in fact, the spiritual master was present within his instructions; in this way, Abhay had always been with his spiritual master. Yet on this annual day, Abhay could not help feeling loss. He remembered how in 1932 he had been a *gr̥hastha* and a new disciple. At that time he had not been free to do as much service as now. Yet it had been in those years that he had been able to see his spiritual master, offer obeisances before him, eat the remnants of his *prasādam*, walk beside him, hear his voice, receive his personal glance. Abhay thought of their meetings together.

How powerful had been Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's mission! His presses had been running day and night, printing magazines, books, the daily *Nadiyā Prakāśa*. And Europe had been a promising new preaching field. With Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura at the helm, the Gaudiya Math had entered into battle against *māyā*'s forces, and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had made all his disciples unafraid. Abhay had always been eager to serve his spiritual master, to serve within the Gaudiya Math with its headquarters in Calcutta. But exactly how he would serve had never been clear to him until his last letter from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

Abhay looked back on the more than twenty years since his spiritual master's disappearance. The Gaudiya Math had been undone by its leaders, and everyone else had scattered like leaves in a storm. It was an unspeakable loss. And it was an old story—how the big *sannyāsīs* had disregarded their spiritual master's instructions and had intrigued, disputed, litigated. Violent party factions, false leaders claiming to be world *ācārya*—and which party had been right? No, both had been wrong, all wrong, because the Gaudiya Math had disintegrated. Now there were dozens of little *maṭhas* and no preaching, no real preaching as before, when he, Sīrṅha-guru, had cast fear into the Māyāvādīs, had led an army of young, powerful preachers to march throughout India and the world. And the greatest sufferers of the Gaudiya Math's dissolution were the people, the nondevotees, who had little hope of being delivered from the batterings of *māyā*. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had begun a spiritual revolution, but that revolution had now been overthrown by *māyā*. The scattered particles of the Gaudiya Math had settled quietly into self-satisfied, insular, almost impotent units. And it was the people in general who suffered.

Abhay groped after memories of his spiritual master. He felt secure in that his own relationship with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was intact, continuing. Yet he felt helpless. He was diligently pursuing his spiritual master's order to preach in English, yet without his spiritual master's physical presence he felt small and very much alone. At times like this, he questioned the wisdom of having left his family and business.

Lamenting Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's absence and the fall of the Gaudiya Math, he composed a Bengali poem, "Viraha-aṣṭaka."

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are always compassionate towards the suffering
jīva souls

On this occasion of your separation, I see only dejection.

An unlimited ocean of mercy, cutting an illusion,
Nityānanda distributed an ocean of flood of love of God.

The *jāti-gosāi* stopped the stream,
But coming yourself, Lord, you revealed this illusion.

So once again everyone was immersed in the flood of love,
Even one so fallen, insignificant, and sinful as I.

On the strength of Lord Caitanya's order
You sent all of your servants door to door as *gurus*.

There was preaching everywhere, from the sea to the Himalayas.
Now, in your absence, everything is darkness.

O Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are always compassionate towards the suffering
jīva souls.

On this occasion of your separation, I see only dejection.

In the same way that Advaita Prabhu brought Lord Gaura,
So did Bhaktivinoda pray.

His enthusiasm brought you; on the strength of his enthusiasm you came
And made everyone understand that India is a holy land.

One who takes his birth in the land of Bhārata
Must make his life perfect and then preach to others.

This *mahā-mantra* message you preached everywhere.
Now in your absence, Lord, everything is darkness.

Your ocean of compassion has again been stopped.
This spear of great misery has cut through my heart.

Without Lord Caitanya's message, there is just confusion.
Seeing this, all the Vaiṣṇavas feel pangs of separation.

The conditioned souls are all in darkness once again.
They are searching for peace, but are dying in an ocean of anxiety.

O Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are always compassionate towards the suffering
jīva souls.

On this occasion of your separation, I see only dejection....

Abhay's was a dark view. The golden era of preaching that had flourished in the days of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was no longer. "By the influence of *māyā*," Abhay wrote, "now everything is darkness . . . All devotional instructions have been destroyed. . . . now everything has been reversed." Meditating on that great personality possessed of the divine power to save the entire world, Abhay expressed his feelings of weakness and helplessness: "Because of those not fixed in devotional service, many branches have spread all over. . . . Your conclusive message did not touch the ear / Where will I get the strength for the *saṅkīrtana* movement?" How could he, a tiny spiritual child, survive without his spiritual father? Now who could save the world, which was so much more oppressed than ever before?

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had said that a dead man could not preach; only one with life could preach. As long as Abhay and others could deeply regret the Gaudiya Math's failure, there was still life and still hope: "If everyone obtained this right and went out and made disciples, / Then the suffering souls in the world could be saved." It was useless to cry over what his Godbrothers had done, yet in seeing and resenting it, Abhay found, within the pain of what might have been, a continuing spark of what still might be.

Abhay sent this poem and "Vṛndāvana-bhajana" to Keśava Mahārāja, who published them in the *Gauḍīya Patrikā*.

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One night Abhay had a striking dream, the same dream he had had several times before, during his days as a householder. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī appeared, just as Abhay had known him, the tall, scholarly *sannyāsī*, coming directly from the spiritual world, from Kṛṣṇa's personal entourage. He called to Abhay and indicated that he should follow. Repeatedly he called and motioned. He was asking Abhay to take *sannyāsa*. Come, he urged, become a *sannyāsī*.

Abhay awoke in a state of wonder. He thought of this instruction as another feature of the original instruction Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had given him at their first meeting in Calcutta, the same instruction that his spiritual master had later solidified in a letter: become an English preacher and spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the

Western world. *Sannyāsa* was for that end; otherwise, why would his spiritual master have asked him to accept it? Abhay reasoned that his spiritual master was saying, “Now take *sannyāsa* and you will actually be able to accomplish this mission. Formerly the time was not right.”

Abhay deliberated cautiously. By accepting *sannyāsa*, a Vaiṣṇava dedicates his body, mind, and words totally to the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, renouncing all other engagements. He was doing that already. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had offered *sannyāsa* to his leading disciples so that they could continue his mission; they hadn’t done it. Preaching in the West had proved perilous even for the Gaudiya Math’s most recognized *sannyāsīs*. How could he, a mere householder, presume he could succeed where the others had failed? He was hesitant. The helpless, incapable feeling he had expressed in his “*Viraha-aṣṭaka*” was there. But now his spiritual master was beckoning him—over all other considerations, even over natural humility. Now, although he was elderly and alone, the desire to preach just as his spiritual master had preached remained within him, a fierce though sometimes quietly expressed determination.

The Vedic standard and the example set by the previous *ācāryas* was that if one wanted to lead a preaching movement, *sannyāsa* was required. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta had taken *sannyāsa* to facilitate his missionary work. Lord Caitanya had taken *sannyāsa* to further the *saṅkīrtana* movement. Of course, Lord Caitanya was the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but when His young students had been disrespectful towards Him, treating Him as an ordinary man, He had taken *sannyāsa*. Because a *sannyāsī* is automatically respected, Lord Caitanya’s acceptance of *sannyāsa* was a calculated tactic; as soon as He began traveling throughout India as a *sannyāsī*, he immediately attracted thousands of followers to the *saṅkīrtana* movement.

Knowing that many cheaters would accept the saffron dress and abuse the respect given to *sannyāsīs*, Lord Caitanya had advised against accepting *sannyāsa* in the Age of Kali. He knew that cheaters, in the guise of *sādhus*, would act immorally, accumulate funds for their own sense gratification, and make many followers simply to enhance their own prestige. Posing as swamis, they would cheat the public. Because the people in Kali-yuga are unable to follow the rules and regulations of *sannyāsa*, Lord Caitanya had recommended that they simply chant Hare

Kṛṣṇa. However, if a person could actually follow the rules, and especially if he had to spread the *saṅkīrtana* movement, *sannyāsa* was necessary.

Abhay first had to approach one of his Godbrothers for permission. He decided to turn to Bhaktivilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja (formerly Kuṅjavihārī), the leader of the Caitanya Math in Calcutta. Abhay still thought of the Caitanya Math as the headquarters of his spiritual master's mission. During the heated legal disputes, the Caitanya Math had been the most prized acquisition, and since 1948 it had been under the legal ownership of Bhaktivilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja. Now, although each *sannyāsī* had his own place or places, the Caitanya Math and Bhaktivilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja legally represented the Gaudiya Math entity. Abhay felt that if he were to take *sannyāsa* and go preach in America, he should give the Caitanya Math the first opportunity to support his work. In April 1959, Abhay wrote to Tīrtha Mahārāja, inquiring about *sannyāsa* as well as about the Caitanya Math's printing some of his manuscripts. And since no one was going abroad, he volunteered to do so on behalf of the Caitanya Math.

Bhaktivilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja replied that Abhay should first join the Caitanya Math. He mentioned the strife that still lingered: "Those who are acting against Caitanya Math, they are motivated by their individual ambitions." Anyone who was against the Caitanya Math, he said, was acting illogically and against the instructions of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. So according to Tīrtha Mahārāja, the thing for Abhay to do, the thing he had neglected to do for so many years, was to join the Caitanya Math and act under his direction. Tīrtha Mahārāja mentioned several members of the Caitanya Math who had recently accepted the *sannyāsa* order, and he said that Abhay could also become one—in time. He invited Abhay to come reside at the Caitanya Math: "The houses that we have, there are rooms that are airy and well lit. We will treat you exclusively. There won't be any difficulty. We will take care that no inconveniences are caused." But as for printing books:

We are eagerly awaiting to print the books like Satsandarbhā, Vedānta, based on devotional service, and many other rare books by the goswamis. First we will print them. Books written by you will be checked by the editorial staff, and if the funds can be raised, then they can be printed ac-

according to priority. The books will be printed only if they are favorable for the service of the Caitanya Math. Therefore, if the fund is raised, then there is a plan to go abroad as well.

Abhay was not encouraged. The main difficulty, he felt, was the Caitanya Math's shortage of funds.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *I was working with my broken typewriter. I went to our Tīrtha Mahārāja: "You give me a room and print my books. Give me some money. I will join you." I had thought, "This is Guru Mahārāja's institution." He did not say no, but the printing of books was a difficult task for him. He had no money. He was hardly collecting for maintaining. Printing of books is a big job, and there is no guarantee of sale.*

Without printing books and going to the West, *sannyāsa* did not have meaning for Abhay. And who knew when Tīrtha Mahārāja would sanction his taking *sannyāsa*? There was no point in going to Calcutta just to reside in an airy, well-lit room; that he had already in Vṛndāvana. Abhay wrote back to Tīrtha Mahārāja, mentioning his direct order from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī to preach to the English-speaking people. He wanted to go to the West right away, and he had thought the Caitanya Math would welcome his offer. Both Abhay and Tīrtha Mahārāja had their responsibilities, but perhaps they could work together to carry out the desire of their spiritual master. Abhay asked Tīrtha Mahārāja to reconsider. On May 7, 1959, Bhaktivilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja wrote back.

My suggestion is don't make any hasty decisions. For the time being you stay with us and engage yourself in the service of the society and then accept tridanda [*sannyāsa*]. The purpose of accepting tridanda is to serve the society.

If that is your desire, then Sri Caitanya Math will decide about your going to America to preach and make all the arrangements. It can never be the principle of the society to let one act according to his individual attempt or desire. The society will decide after consulting with the heads what is to be done by whom. This is what I want to say. First of all, it is necessary to identify oneself with the society.

In order to preach in America or in other foreign countries, it is important to have a dignified organization in the background and secondly it is

necessary to establish one's self in India before going to preach in the foreign countries.

Now it is that there are no conferences or meetings in the West as before. Communication is done through the media of television.

Abhay could understand the needs and priorities of the Caitanya Math, but he could not allow them to overrule what he considered the highest mandate: preaching as Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had ordered. Abhay had offered his services to the leaders of the Caitanya Math, thinking they might also see things his way. He thought that with the world's crying need for Kṛṣṇa consciousness staring them in the face, they might see that this Abhay Bābū was convinced and enthusiastic and so should be sent right away with whatever he required. But they had other priorities.

Abhay next turned to Keśava Mahārāja in Mathurā, and Keśava Mahārāja told Abhay to take *sannyāsa* immediately. After corresponding with Tīrtha Mahārāja, Abhay had felt some uncertainty about accepting *sannyāsa*, and now that he was being encouraged so strongly, he resisted. But Keśava Mahārāja was insistent.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *I was sitting alone in Vṛndāvana, writing. My Godbrother insisted to me, "Bhaktivedānta Prabhu, you must do it. Without accepting the renounced order of life, nobody can become a preacher." So he insisted. Not he insisted; practically my spiritual master insisted. He wanted me to become a preacher, so he forced me through this Godbrother: "You accept." So, unwillingly I accepted.*

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Keśavajī Gaudīya Math was located in the midst of one of Mathurā's downtown bazaars. Its main entrance, an arched doorway, led into a courtyard, open to the sky through a metal grating above. The architecture was similar to that of the Vamśī-gopālajī temple. The atmosphere was secluded, as in a monastery. Abhay was a familiar, welcomed figure here. He had lived here, written and studied in the library here, edited the *Gaudīya Patrikā*, and donated the Deity of Lord Caitanya who stood on the altar beside the Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa (Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Vinodavihārījī). But his visit during September of 1959 was not an ordi-

nary one. He entered the *maṭha* dressed in white, Abhay Bābū, but he would soon be leaving dressed in saffron, a swami.

Abhay had been living as a renunciant for nine years; there was no need for him to observe a ceremony or to proclaim himself a *sādhū* by changing to saffron dress. But it was the *paramparā* system that a man take *tridaṇḍi-sannyāsa* at the end of his life. He was aware of the cheating *sannyāsīs*; even in Vṛndāvana he had seen so-called *sādhūs* who did not preach but simply spent their days hunting for *capātīs*. Some “swamis” of Vṛndāvana even indulged illicitly in what they had supposedly come here to reject: sex life. Such persons were making a mockery of *sannyāsa*. And there were the caste *gosvāmīs* also, who lived like ordinary householders, running temples as a business to support their families and accepting honor and donations from the public on the false basis of birth. Abhay knew of these abuses of *sannyāsa*, but he also knew the real purpose of *sannyāsa*. *Sannyāsa* was for preaching.

On the morning of September 17, 1959, in the fifty-by-twenty-five-foot Deity room on the second floor of the Keśavajī Math, a group of devotees sat before the Deities of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya. The Deities were colorfully dressed in royal clothing and silver crowns. Rādhārāṇī's right hand faced palm-forward in benediction for the worshiper; at Her side, Her left hand held a flower for Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa stood like a dancer, placing His right leg in a casual tiptoe pose before His left, playing His long silver flute, which He held gracefully to His red lips. His long black hair reached down past His shoulders, and the garland of marigolds around His neck reached down to His knees. On His right stood the Deity of Lord Caitanya, His right arm raised, left arm at His side, His body straight, feet together. He was a soft golden color, and He had large eyes, a well-formed red mouth, and straight black hair down to His shoulders. One level below the Deities were pictures of the spiritual masters in disciplic succession: Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī, Bhaktivinoda Thākura, Gaurakīśora dāsa Bābājī, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Bhaktiprajñāna Keśava Mahārāja.

Abhay sat on a mat of *kuśa* grass beside ninety-year-old Sanātana, also to receive *sannyāsa* that day. Sitting opposite the two candidates, Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, Keśava Mahārāja's disciple, prepared to conduct the ceremony of *mantras* and offerings of grains and ghee into the fire. Akiñcana Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī, Abhay's Godbrother, known for sweet singing, played *mṛdaṅga* and sang Vaiṣṇava *bhajanās*. Sitting on a raised

āsana, His Holiness Keśava Mahārāja presided. Since there had been no notices or invitations, only the *maṭha*'s few residents attended.

Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja chanted the required *mantras* and then sat back silently while Keśava Mahārāja lectured. Then, to everyone's surprise, Keśava Mahārāja asked Abhay to speak. Abhay had not expected this. As he looked around at the gathering of devotees, he understood that the common language was Hindi; only Keśava Mahārāja and a few others spoke English. Yet he knew he must speak in English.

After Abhay's speech, each initiate received his *sannyāsa-danda*, the traditional head-high staff made of four bamboo rods bound together and completely enwrapped in saffron cloth. They were given their *sannyāsa* garments: one piece of saffron cloth for a *dhotī*, one for a top piece, and two strips for underwear. They also received *tulasī* neck beads and the *sannyāsa-mantra*. Keśava Mahārāja said that Abhay would now be known as Bhaktivedanta Swami Mahārāja and that Sanātana would be Muni Mahārāja. After the ceremony, the two new *sannyāsīs* posed for a photo, standing on either side of their *sannyāsa-guru*, who sat in a chair.

Keśava Mahārāja didn't impose any strictures on Abhay; he simply encouraged him to go on preaching. Yet Abhay knew that to become A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami did not mean merely that he was giving up family, home comforts, and business. That he had done five years ago. Changing from white cloth to saffron cloth, from Abhay Bābū to Bhaktivedanta Swami Mahārāja, had a special significance: it was the mandate he had required, the irrevocable commitment. Now it was only a matter of time before Bhaktivedanta Swami would travel to the West as Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had ordained. This was Bhaktivedanta Swami's realization of his new *sannyāsa* status.

The *Gauḍīya Patrikā*'s account of the *sannyāsa* initiation included a biographical sketch of Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedanta Swami Mahārāja, listing the major events of his life. The article concluded:

Seeing his enthusiasm and ability to write articles in Hindi, English, and Bengali, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Mahārāja gave him the instruction to take *tridaṇḍī-sannyāsa*. For nearly one year he had been ready to accept *sannyāsa*. In the month of Bhādra, on the day on which Viśvarūpa accepted *sannyāsa*, Bhaktivedanta Swami at the Śrī Keśavaji Gaudiya Math

accepted *sannyāsa* from the founder of the Vedānta Samiti, Bhaktiprajñāna Keśava Mahārāja. Seeing him accept his *āśrama* of renunciation, seeing this pastime for accepting the renounced order of life, we have attained great affection and enthusiasm.



CHAPTER TEN

“This Momentous Hour of Need”

Our capacity of presenting the matter in adequate language, specially a foreign language, will certainly fail and there may be so many literary discrepancies inspite of our honest attempt to present it in the proper way. But we are sure that with our all faults in this connection the seriousness of the subject matter will be taken into consideration and the leaders of the society will still accept this on account of its being an honest attempt for glorifying the Almighty Great so much now badly needed.

—From Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,
Canto 1, Vol. 1

Bhaktivedanta Swami, accompanied by some of the Keśavajī Math's devotees, made a short preaching tour of Agra, Kanpur, Jhansi, and Delhi. But he was soon back in his own place at the Vamśī-gopālajī temple. No one called him Abhay Bābū any longer; even amongst friends it was Swamiji or Mahārāja. And people often addressed him as Swami Bhaktivedantajī, Swami Mahārāja, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami. People readily recognized him as a *sādhū* and offered respect. Yet his basic problems remained. He wanted to write and print, but he had no money. He wanted to broadcast the message of Godhead, but few were willing to listen. Such things hadn't been changed by his becoming a swami.

When a librarian advised Bhaktivedanta Swami to write books (they were permanent, whereas newspapers were read once and thrown away), he took it that his spiritual master was speaking through this person.

Then an Indian Army officer who liked *Back to Godhead* suggested the same thing. Bhaktivedanta Swami took it as a revelation from his spiritual master. As a dependent servant constantly meditating on the desires of his transcendental master and seeking his guidance, Bhaktivedanta Swami felt his spiritual master's reciprocal blessings and personal presence. More and more he was feeling confidential contact with Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta, and now he was feeling an inspiration to write books.

He considered *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, because it was the most important and authoritative Vaiṣṇava scripture. Although *Bhagavad-gītā* was the essence of all Vedic knowledge, presented in a brief ABC fashion, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was elaborate. And Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had both written Bengali commentaries on the *Bhāgavatam*. In fact, most of the great Vaiṣṇava ācāryas of the past had commented on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Lord Caitanya Himself had recommended *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as the spotless Vedic literature. An English translation and commentary for this book could one day change the hearts of the entire world. And if he could publish even a few books, his preaching would be enhanced; he could go abroad with confidence and not appear empty-handed.

One day Gauracand Gosvāmī, proprietor of the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, approached Bhaktivedanta Swami, inviting him to come live at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple; being the eternal home of Jīva Gosvāmī and Rūpa Gosvāmī, it would be more suitable for his writing and translating. Bhaktivedanta Swami was interested. He had never stopped his regular visits there, and he always felt inspired in the presence of the *samādhi* tombs of the great leaders of Lord Caitanya's movement, Jīva Gosvāmī and Rūpa Gosvāmī. But when he went to look at the two available rooms, he found them in poor repair; they had not been maintained or lived in for many years. Not wanting to miss the opportunity, however, Bhaktivedanta Swami agreed to take the rooms, at five rupees per month. He estimated that for a little more than five hundred rupees he could have electricity installed and extensive repairs made; and when it was finished he could move in.

Bhaktivedanta Swami saw the invitation as auspicious, and living there would complement his new project of presenting *Śrīmad-*

Bhāgavatam in English. Of all Vṛndāvana's temples, Rādhā-Dāmodara had the largest collection of original writings by the six Gosvāmīs and their followers—more than two thousand separate manuscripts, many of them three hundred, some even four hundred years old. Bhaktivedanta Swami looked forward to residing there some day and serving in the company of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī. For now he would remain at the Varṇśī-gopālajī temple, and with whatever money he could collect he would gradually repair the rooms.

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It was an important maxim of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's that a preacher should go to the cities and not remain in the seclusion of a holy place. So in that spirit, Bhaktivedanta Swami continued commuting to Delhi, even though to him it was a hell and even though he had no fixed residence there. Often he was taken in by businessmen who felt obliged on the basis of Indian culture: a good man, if he wanted to be favored by God, should accommodate the *sādhus* and give them meals and a place to stay. But the vision of such pious men was a sentimental Hinduism, and their receptions were artificial; they could not really appreciate Bhaktivedanta Swami's work. And Bhaktivedanta Swami was not of a mind to impose himself upon such hosts.

Then he spoke with Mr. Hitsaran Sharma, manager of the Radha Press. In the past Mr. Sharma had printed flyers and stationery for the League of Devotees, and Bhaktivedanta Swami had stayed in Mr. Sharma's house on occasion. Mr. Sharma introduced Bhaktivedanta Swami to Pandit Sri Krishna Sharma, a caste *brāhmaṇa* and active religionist, secretary to the century-old Delhi religious society Sri Naval Prem Sabha. Out of sympathy for Bhaktivedanta Swami's literary labors, Krishna Pandit gave him a room in his Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple in the Chipiwada neighborhood of Old Delhi. Now Bhaktivedanta Swami would have a permanent office in Delhi.

The train from Mathurā would arrive at the Old Delhi station near Chandni Chowk, the broad avenue down which poured a river of work-day traffic: rickshas, bicycle riders sometimes a dozen abreast, autos in lesser numbers, men running on foot pulling heavy carts, and beasts of

burden—donkeys, oxen, an occasional camel or elephant, carrying heavy loads and being driven by men with whips in their hands.

From the intensely busy Chandni Chowk, Bhaktivedanta Swami would take the short walk to Chippiwada, past the Red Fort, keeping the Gauri-Śaṅkara temple on his left, then proceeding along a side street past the large, imposing Jama Mosque. Near Chippiwada the streets would become narrow. Chippiwada had been a Muslim neighborhood until the India-Pakistan partition of 1947, when thousands of Punjabi Hindus had settled there. Chippiwada was part of a mixed Hindu-Muslim neighborhood so crowded with people that cars were not allowed to enter the streets; only ox carts and rickshas could penetrate the narrow, crowded lanes, and in some areas the lanes were planted with iron posts to keep rickshas out. Even a bicycle rider would create havoc amongst the densely packed crowds of shoppers and workers who moved along the streets and lanes. Side streets led to other side streets—lanes so narrow that the second-floor balconies on opposite sides of the street were only inches apart, practically forming a roof over the street, so that a pedestrian could glimpse only the narrowest patch of sky. Private yards, shops, and alleys became almost indistinguishable from the public thoroughfares. Although most shops bore signs in Hindi with subheadings in English, some bore the curvy scripts of Arabic, and women dressed in black with veiled faces were a common sight. In the heart of this intense city life was the narrow entrance of Krishna Pandit's Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple, with a plaque of the demigod Gaṇeśa and a row of nesting pigeons just above its simple arched door.

The temple, with its resident families, retained some of the tenement atmosphere of the neighborhood. Although the temple room was dark, the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities on the altar were well illuminated. Rādhārāṇī was the color of cream, and Kṛṣṇa was black marble and stood about two feet tall. He was decorated with dots of fresh sandalwood pulp and a mask of yellow sandalwood on His forehead. Both Deities were dressed in silk garments. On the second floor, just above the Deity room, was a guest room, Bhaktivedanta Swami's room. Its cement walls and floor were completely bare. Protruding up from the floor was a three-foot-high concrete pyramid with a spire, indicating that the Deities were directly beneath.

Bhaktivedanta Swami soon found that his room was not secluded but was side by side with other residential rooms. Outside the door, a metal

grating smaller than in the Varṁśi-gopālājī temple and Keśavājī Math revealed the small temple courtyard below. From the roof, hardly a single tree could be seen. The view was of tenement rooftops so tightly crowded together that it seemed one could walk from roof to roof all the way to the colossal Jama Masjid. The mosque’s three large domes, surrounded by taller minarets, rose high above the ordinary buildings, attracting flocks of pigeons, which perched upon the domes or flew in wheeling patterns in the sky.

Krishna Pandit dressed in a black, lightweight cotton coat, the kind made internationally recognizable by Pandit Nehru, and he had the Nehru hat also. He spoke good English and was garrulous. He was well known and respected within the neighborhood. He saw Bhaktivedanta Swami as God-sent—a *sādhū* for him to take care of and thus prove once again the piety of Hindu culture. He found his new guest likable: a simple, gentle, gracious, and accomplished Vaiṣṇava scholar.

Krishna Pandit said he understood the importance of Bhaktivedanta Swami’s *sanātana-dharma* mission and his need for a Delhi office, and he vowed to supply his guest with whatever he required. Although Bhaktivedanta Swami was reluctant to ask for anything for himself, Krishna Pandit brought in a sitting mat and a low table, placing them before the pyramid, and he also brought a mattress. He showed Bhaktivedanta Swami how to operate the room’s single light, a bulb and metal shade that hung from a cord and could be raised or lowered by hand. He brought a picture of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa that had been given to his *guru* by the Mahārāja of Jaipur and set it within a niche in the wall, relishing that Bhaktivedanta Swami could gaze upon it with the eyes of a true devotee.

Bhaktivedanta Swami had wanted a secure place for writing books before going to the West, and Lord Kṛṣṇa had provided it. Now he could work either in Vṛndāvana or in Delhi. Almost immediately he began *Back to Godhead* again, serializing book excerpts from his previous manuscripts, while at the same time beginning *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

When Krishna Pandit learned of his guest’s lone struggles to produce *Back to Godhead*, he volunteered to help with some of the business aspects of the publication. Bhaktivedanta Swami was indeed gratified by Krishna Pandit’s sincere help, and in appreciation he gave him an addition to his name: Hari-bhaktānudāsa, “one who serves the Lord’s devotee.” After six months in Chippiwada, Bhaktivedanta Swami wrote an appreciation in the temple’s guest book.

I am pleased to write herein that I have come to Delhi from my H.Q. 1/859, Keshi Ghat, Vrindaban (U.P.) purely on spiritual mission to propagate the cult of devotional service of the Lord. And I am more pleased to mention herewith that Sriman Sri Krishna Sharma, Haribhaktanudas, has provided me a suitable room for my literary activities. I am publishing an English fortnightly magazine of the name "Back to Godhead" from this place and the Nawal Prem Shabha of which Sri Krishnaji is the Hony. Secretary is arranging for my daily lectures on Srimad Bhagwat.

Late Pandit Jyoti Prasad Sharma, father of Shri Krishnaji, was also known to me, and during his lifetime whenever I used to come to Delhi, Late Pandit Jyoti Prasadji would provide me with residential place. His good son is also following in the footprints of his noble father, and as secretary of the Nawal Prem Shabha, he is doing good service in propagating Rama Nama all over the city.

In neat English script, Bhaktivedanta Swami went on to write that, in his opinion, temples should be used solely for educating the public in spiritual values and that it was his personal mission to organize temples for that service.

Temples are not meant for ordinary householders engaged simply in the matters of animal propensities. Those who are actually engaged in the service of the Lord Deity, the predominator of the temple, can only be allowed to remain in the temple, otherwise not.

Trying to compose *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* at Chippiwada while surrounded by sometimes noisy families with their nondevotional domestic habits had impressed upon him the importance of *not* using a temple as an apartment house.

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Despite his plans to settle down and begin the monumental task of translating *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Bhaktivedanta Swami was ready to preach in other ways also. In October of 1959 he had encountered a news article in *The Times of India*. Two American scientists had received the Nobel prize in physics for discovering the antiproton. "According to one of the fundamental assumptions of the new theory," the article read, "there may exist another world or an anti-world built up of anti-

matter." The "other world" reminded Bhaktivedanta Swami of the eternal spiritual world described in *Bhagavad-gītā*. He was well aware that the scientists were not speaking of *antimaterial* in the sense of "eternal" or "spiritual," but he thought of using their scientific terms to capture the interest of scientific-minded people. He conceived of an essay presenting the theistic science of *Bhagavad-gītā* in terms of the antimaterial particle and the antimaterial world.

It was a time when the whole world was talking of space travel. Indian news media had reported the Russian Sputnik two years ago, and the race for space had begun. Seizing on the current interest in space travel, Bhaktivedanta Swami described how by *bhakti-yoga* the soul can travel past the farthest reaches of space to the eternal planets of the spiritual world, where life is blissful and full of knowledge. He gave his own fresh translations of *Bhagavad-gītā* verses, couched in the language of the new physics, with its antimaterial particle and antimaterial world. The complete work, *Easy Journey to Other Planets*, was a fifteen-thousand-word manuscript, and he showed it to Hitsaran Sharma of Radha Press. But he didn't have enough money to get the little book printed.

In February of 1960 Bhaktivedanta Swami decided to print it himself in two installments of *Back to Godhead*. The articles drew an immediate response from a physicist at the Gujarat University in Ahmedabad, Mr. Y. G. Naik, who received *Back to Godhead* through the mail. Dr. Naik thought Bhaktivedanta Swami's application of the antimaterial principle was "really a grand one. . . . This is no doubt a classic essay. . . ." Dr. Naik was interested in further discussion on physics and transcendental knowledge, and Bhaktivedanta Swami replied with equal enthusiasm, finally asking the physicist to join him in distributing the cultural heritage of India to the whole world.

Convinced that such an essay had great potential to interest educated English-speaking readers, Bhaktivedanta Swami worked hard to raise enough in donations to print *Easy Journey to Other Planets* as a paperback book. He finally did so in the fall of 1960. A foreword by Dr. N. K. Sidhanta, vice chancellor of the University of Delhi, arrived late but was included in the book as an insert.

While everyone may gain from it, the student community in particular is recommended to read the book with care and practice *Bhaktiyoga*, which

will help to strengthen the mind and build up character. I shall be glad to see this work read by the students and the teachers alike. . . .

Several Indian scientists and scholars contributed reviews, noting the book's "scientific cum spiritual vision" and "the method of speeding over space not by mechanical acceleration of speed, but through psychological effort and spiritual emancipation." It was only thirty-eight pages, but it was his first publication aside from the one-page folded newspaper, *Back to Godhead*. He tried to distribute the little book effectively. He gave one copy to Dr. P. Bannerji of the National Museum of New Delhi.

Dr. Bannerji: *He used to come to the library and consult some books, and I met him there. He gave me a book called Easy Journey to Other Planets. He gave me some copies to distribute for a rupee or half a rupee each.*

I felt attracted to him. I thought he was a saintly person with pure devotion and without any outward glamor. He was not out to attract people just for name and fame. He had little support from anybody. He was living alone in a small room in Chippiwada. He was devoted to his studies. So I asked him, "Sir, if you have time and you don't mind coming to my house, could you kindly come on Sundays and recite the Bhāgavata in my house? He readily agreed. He was a good scholar. He was learned in the scriptures, and he was fond of communicating his ideas to others. He was a good speaker and a good conversationalist. He was very polite.

Whatever he said he said very distinctly. He spoke in Bengali and explained the essence of the verses. Sometimes he also referred to the commentaries, just to give me more information. The others were not very much interested in commentary or in difficult aspects, but because he knew that I had some studies in the field, he explained the commentaries for my sake and for the sake of one or two other gentlemen who were also very elderly and very scholarly.

The gatherings at my home would be attended by about twenty or thirty people, and he would continue his explanation for one or two hours. Then he would recite the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, and we would also take part with the karatālas and harmonium. So it was a very enjoyable gathering, because he made the difficult things very easy and he ex-

plained everything to all of us according to our needs. He knew that this much is for this person, this much is intended for this man, this much for the others.

After the meetings, he used to take a little rest in my house. I requested him to take meals in my house, but he said he did not take meals prepared by others. But when he met my wife and she said she would be happy to prepare the meals, he said, “All right, I will take,” and she used to prepare meals on Sundays when he would come.

He sometimes asked me how to get more and more people attracted towards this field. But as a government worker, I could not persuade anyone very openly. Nor had I the time to organize anything on a big scale for him. But he was not satisfied with that. He asked me if I could organize on a bigger scale. He knew that the people who attended the meetings at my house were very old—seventy, eighty, one was ninety years of age—retired, educated persons.

It lasted for no less than a year. After that, he said he would be trying to go out to other places. He asked me to continue the gatherings, but I said, “I am not initiated.” He said I could continue anyway, because I was born as a brāhmaṇa. He gave me the authority to continue for some time. But I could not continue, because I used to go out. I lost all interest after he left. I was a government servant.

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Easy Journey to Other Planets had been like a warm-up for his real work of presenting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. But now he was even more convinced of the need for books. To preach, he would have to have books—especially if he were to go to the West. With books he could create a spiritual revolution. There was so much literature in the West, but Westerners had nothing like this, nothing to fill their spiritual vacuum.

Although he wanted to give as much time as possible to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, he decided to continue with *Back to Godhead* by using excerpts from already existing book manuscripts as articles. Occasionally, however, he would write and print a new article. In “Relevant Inquiries” he wrote:

We are just trying to make an humble attempt to save the human being by propaganda of Back to Godhead. This propaganda is not fictitious. If there is any reality at all this propaganda of Back to Godhead is the beginning of that era-of-reality.

In "A Godless Civilization" Bhaktivedanta Swami referred to Prime Minister Nehru's complaints about the misuse of public funds in the name of religion. Bhaktivedanta Swami noted that although there were undoubtedly instances in which religious leaders were implicated in criminal offenses, if statistics were compared the religious cheaters would be outnumbered by the political cheaters. Although Pandit Nehru had been right in warning of religious fraud, the warning could not be effective without a thorough reform of spiritual institutions, and that reform could be accomplished only with the cooperation of government leaders. Bhaktivedanta Swami quoted from his letter in which he had asked Prime Minister Nehru to take up the study of *Bhagavad-gītā*; but, as he informed his *Back to Godhead* readers, Pandit Nehru had never replied. "Because of his lack of spiritual knowledge . . . he thought that this institution [the League of Devotees] might be something like the so many mathas and temples which have become the source of headache for the Pandit."

Bhaktivedanta Swami charged that Pandit Nehru thought that any spiritual organization "is a dungeon for accumulating public funds and then misuse it for questionable purposes."

He, however, approves of the so-called Sadhus who do social service and talk nonsense in the spiritual science. This is so because he has no depth of spiritual knowledge for himself although he is Brahmin and Pandit. Ignorance in spiritual knowledge is the qualification of the Sudras or the labouring class.

He requested Pandit Nehru not to be afraid of the word *God* or *Kṛṣṇa*: "but we can assure him that there is no such cause of fear, because Krishna is everyone's friend and . . . able to render real help to everyone. . . ." Bhaktivedanta Swami ended by suggesting that immoral practices were not confined only to the temples of India, but were common to materialistic civilizations all over the world. In particular he cited the disturbances amongst youth that were becoming rampant in the 1960s.

The best thing will be for the physician to heal himself first. Because in Godless civilisation, while the occupants of the Mathas and temples have been the cause of headache for the Pandit, the same thing under a different label has become the cause of headache for other European and Asian statesmen. The unbridled youngsters of those countries under the name of “Teddy Boys” in England, the “Rebels without Cause” in America, and the “Half Strong” in Germany, the “Leather Jackets” in Sweden, the “Children of the Sun” in Japan, and the “Style Boys” in U.S.S.R. are some of the by-products of a Godless Civilisation. And that is the root cause of all headache. That requires a thorough treatment.

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At Chippiwada, Bhaktivedanta Swami followed much the same daily schedule as at Keśi-ghāṭa, except that with Krishna Pandit doing some of the secretarial work for *Back to Godhead*, he was free to devote more hours to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Krishna Pandit: *He used to translate Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam before dawn, about 3:00 A.M. In the beginning there was no typewriter, but then he arranged a portable typewriter. He would do his daily work and then cook his food himself. I arranged raw materials for his cooking. Sometimes he used to come to my family asking my wife to get some food. Sometimes he would also bathe at 5:00 or 6:00 in the afternoon.*

Every day he was typing. And he himself was reading some Bhāgavatam. And he was going down in the temple for darśana. Then he was going outside, sometimes returning at 2:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon. Then he was typing and sending the proofs of Back to Godhead to a place and checking them. He was doing all this type of work. His main activity was typing many hours a day.

Bhaktivedanta Swami worked from a Sanskrit and Bengali *Bhāgavatam*, edited by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and a large book containing the original commentaries of twelve great *ācāryas*. He had a standard format: he made a roman transliteration of the Sanskrit *devanāgarī* script, then word-for-word English synonyms, an English prose translation, and finally his English purport on that verse. Before writing his own purport, however, he would consult the commentaries of the *ācāryas*, especially Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī, Jīva Gosvāmī, Vijayadhvaja Tīrtha, and Śrīdhara Svāmī.

He contemplated the size of the project he was attempting. The *Bhāgavatam* contained eighteen thousand verses. The First Canto's seventeen chapters would fill three volumes of four hundred pages each, and the Second Canto, with ten chapters, would take two volumes. Up through the Ninth Canto there would be maybe thirty volumes. The Tenth Canto, containing ninety chapters, would take twenty volumes. There were twelve cantos, and so the total would be at least sixty volumes. He thought he might be able to finish it in five to seven years: "If the Lord keeps me physically fit, then in the fulfillment of Śrīla Prabhupāda's will I could complete this work."

He decided to introduce the first volume with a biographical sketch of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, "The Ideal Preacher of the *Bhāgavatam*." The reader could best appreciate the *Bhāgavatam* by seeing its practical demonstration in the life of Lord Caitanya. The special feature of Lord Caitanya's presentation had been His desire that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* "be preached in every nook and corner of the world by everyone who happens to take his birth in India." Lord Caitanya had called *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* the "spotless *Purāṇa*" and had considered the chanting and hearing of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* along with the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra to be a complete scientific process for developing pure love of God.

Working from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's commentary on *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and *Caitanya-bhāgavata*, Bhaktivedānta Swami gave a fifty-page synopsis of Lord Caitanya's life and His *saṅkīrtana* movement. He described Lord Caitanya's divine ecstasies, His philosophical confrontations with leading scholars of the day, and His inauguration of the *saṅkīrtana* movement, the congregational chanting of the holy name. Bhaktivedānta Swami especially connected Lord Caitanya's life and teachings to what he saw as the present crucial time in history. Help for humanity in "this momentous hour of need" lay in the Vedic literature, and especially in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

We know that the foreign invaders of India could break down some of the monumental architectural work in India, but they were unable to break up the perfect ideals of human civilisation so far kept hidden within the Sanskrit language of Vedic wisdom.

The Sanskrit language had protected the secret for thousands of centuries, but now the secret had to be released to the world.

As he approached the first verses of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Bhaktivedanta Swami became absorbed in the *Bhāgavatam*'s purpose. The verses stressed that the *Bhāgavatam* alone could save society from the evil influences of the Age of Kali. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*'s recommendation for this age was simply to hear from the pure devotees about the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa.

The setting of the *Bhāgavatam* was a gathering of sages at Naimiṣāranya about five thousand years ago, at the dawn of the present Age of Kali. Foreseeing the degradation of humanity, the sages asked the senior member of the assembly, Sūta Gosvāmī, “Now that Lord Kṛṣṇa, the shelter of all religious principles, has returned to His spiritual abode, where are religious principles to be found?” Sūta's answer was that the epic *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, “which is as brilliant as the sun,” was a literary incarnation of God and would give direction to persons lost in the dense darkness of Kali-yuga.

In the beginning of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Śrīla Vyāsadeva, under the instruction of his spiritual master, Nārada Muni, sat down and entered a deep meditation. In trance he saw the Supreme Personality of Godhead, His energies, and the suffering souls of Kali-yuga. He also saw that the remedy for their suffering was pure devotional service. With this vision and the instructions of his spiritual master as his inspiration, Vyāsadeva set about to compile *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to give the highest benefit to the suffering souls of Kali-yuga.

In presenting the literary incarnation of God, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, for the benefit of the Western world, Bhaktivedanta Swami realized that he was performing an important task, following in the footsteps of Śrīla Vyāsadeva. As Śrīla Vyāsadeva had had a vision of Kṛṣṇa and had received direction from his spiritual master before beginning his literary mission, Bhaktivedanta Swami had his vision and had received instructions from his spiritual master. Bhaktivedanta Swami envisioned distributing in mass the book of Śrīla Vyāsadeva. He would not merely translate it; he would personally take it to the West, present it, and teach people in the West—through the book and in person—how to develop pure love of God.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *The communist party has become popular simply by distributing their literatures. In Calcutta, the communist agents were inviting friends and reading their literature. The Russians never came to India, but by distributing literature in every language they got a pretty*

good number of followers. If it is possible for ordinary, third-class, mundane literature, why shouldn't transcendental literature create devotees all over the world? There is good potency for pushing on these literatures very vigorously from village to village. The bhāgavata-dharma is the original religion of the human society. Whatever else may be passing as religion has come from the Vedic literature. People are after these books. They are hankering for them. Lord Caitanya said that in every town and village on the surface of the world they will know the message of the saṅkīrtana movement. This means that in every village and town all over the world there are many candidates who are awaiting this message. It is transcendental literature. Nobody can challenge it. It is done so nicely, without any spot, the spotless Purāṇa.

Bhaktivedanta Swami put his faith in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, giving up almost all other kinds of missionary activity. And this had been the advice and example of his spiritual master and of Lord Caitanya. They had not been interested in building costly temples or in creating many neophyte disciples. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had stressed preaching. Preaching meant books, and the best book was *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. To write and publish the *Bhāgavatam* for the enlightenment of the general populace was real service to the Lord. That was Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's opinion. He had preferred publishing books to establishing temples, and he had specifically told his disciples to write books. It was the business of advanced, empowered devotees to write books, publish them, and distribute them widely. A program to distribute transcendental literature everywhere (with even more expertise than the communists) would create a great positive effect on the people of Europe and America. And if Europeans and Americans turned to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then the rest of the world would follow. Bhaktivedanta Swami continued working alone in his room at Chippiwada, absorbed in thoughts of spreading the news of Kṛṣṇa on a scale never before attempted.

He sometimes wondered how Westerners, who were so far removed from the Vedic culture, could adopt it. They were meat-eaters, *mlecchas*. When one of his Godbrothers had gone to England, the Marquis of Zetland, on hearing the four prohibitions against sinful life, had laughed scornfully, "Impossible!" But *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* spoke for itself.

"Sri Krishna the Personality of Godhead who is also the Paramatma in

every one's heart and the benefactor of the truthful devotee, does cleanse the desire for material enjoyment in the heart of the devotee who has developed the urge for hearing His (Krishna's) messages which are themselves virtuous when properly heard and chanted."

Although he was known as an English preacher, Bhaktivedanta Swami knew there were always faults in his presentation in that foreign language; and there was no editor to correct them. But such technical faults would not keep him from printing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. This idea was also presented in the opening chapters of the *Bhāgavatam*. "The literature which is full with description of transcendental glories of the Name, Fame, Forms, Pastimes etc. of the Unlimited Supreme Lord, is a different creation of transcendental vocabulary all meant for bringing about a revolution in the impious life of a misdirected civilization of the world. Such transcendental literatures even though irregularly composed, is heard, sung and accepted by the purified men who are thoroughly honest."

Bhaktivedanta Swami wrote in his purport: "We know that in our honest attempt for presenting this great literature conveying transcendental message for reviving the God-consciousness of the people in general, as a matter of re-spiritualisation of the world atmosphere, is fret with many difficulties. . . . our capacity of presenting the matter in adequate language, specially a foreign language, will certainly fail and there may be so many literary discrepancies inspite of our honest attempt to present it in the proper way. But we are sure that with our all faults in this connection the seriousness of the subject matter will be taken into consideration and the leaders of the society will still accept this on account of its being an honest attempt for glorifying the Almighty Great so much now badly needed. When there is fire in the house, the inmates of the house go out for help from the neighbours who may be foreigners to such inmates and yet without any adequate language the victims of the fire express themselves and the neighbours understand the need even though not expressed in adequate language. The same spirit of co-operation is needed in the matter of broadcasting this transcendental message of the Srimad Bhagwatam throughout the whole polluted atmosphere of the present day world situation. After all it is a technical science of spiritual values and as such we are concerned with the techniques and not with the language. If the techniques of this great

literature are understood by the people of the world, there is the success.”

Certainly Kali-yuga was such an emergency—the house was on fire. Honest men who could understand the need would welcome *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, even though it was now being presented “with so many faulty and broken linguistic technicalities. . . .” Bhaktivedanta Swami was presenting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* unchanged, with the greatest respect for Śrīla Vyāsadeva. And that was his cardinal virtue. He was adding his own realizations, but not in a spirit of trying to surpass the previous spiritual masters. In the all-important matter of presenting the subject strictly in *paramparā*, Bhaktivedanta Swami suffered from no “faulty and broken technicalities.” He knew that without the *paramparā* the *Bhāgavatam* purports would have no value. Day and night he typed at his desk beneath the small adjustable light that dangled from the ceiling on its cord. He sat on a thin mat, his back to the large pyramid that stood oddly upright within the bare room. Pages accumulated, and he kept them in place with stones. Food and sleep, although necessary, were only incidental. He was completely convinced that his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* would create a revolution in a misdirected civilization. Thus he translated each word and gave each purport with exacting care and concentration. But it had to be done as quickly as possible.

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In February of 1961, on Vyāsa-pūjā day, the anniversary of the appearance of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Bhaktivedanta Swami was again in Vṛndāvana. In honor of their spiritual master, some of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta’s disciples had gathered, offered flowers before his picture, and held congregational chanting in the temple. But Bhaktivedanta Swami thought that they should be doing much more than that; they should be planning and executing the worldwide preaching mission that Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had desired. Instead, they were a gathering of independent individuals, each with his own small idea, each maintaining a small center or living at a center, but with no world programs, not even a program for India. Most of them had no plans or vision beyond their own bodily maintenance. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had asked for a governing body to conduct his movement, but there was no governing

body, and practically there was no movement. Some who had fought bitterly were again on speaking terms and feared that any sudden organizational attempts now might simply stir up old animosities. At least they could gather together and make an offering to their spiritual master.

Amongst his Godbrothers, Bhaktivedanta Swami was a junior *san-nyāsi*. Although a recognized writer and editor, he had no temple or followers. Yet he knew he was trying to follow Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. He saw himself helpless and alone against the vast forces of *māyā*. His Godbrothers were not an army united against *māyā*'s forces, but were more like apathetic monks, growing old, holding on to religious principles and rituals, devoid of life. How could they gather to worship their spiritual master without distressfully admitting their failure and, in the spirit of “better late than never,” trying to rectify it?

Since the custom on Vyāsa-pūjā day was for each disciple to write an offering glorifying his spiritual master and to share it within the assembly of Godbrothers, Bhaktivedanta Swami wrote an offering—more like an explosion than a eulogy—and humbly placed it before his Godbrothers for their response.

Even now, my Godbrothers, you return here on the order of our master, and together we engage in this *pūjā*.

But simply a festival of flowers and fruits does not constitute worship. The one who serves the message of the *guru* really worships him. . . .

Oh, shame! My dear brothers, aren't you embarrassed? In the manner of businessmen you increase your disciples.

Our master said to preach! Let the neophytes remain inside the temples and simply ring the bells. . . .

But just take a good look at the terrible situation that has arisen. Everyone has become a sense enjoyer and has given up preaching. . . .

From the seas, across the earth, penetrate the universal shell; come together and preach this Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Then our master's service will be in proper order. Make your promise today. Give up all your politics and diplomacy.

If the disciples of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī could join and preach together, there was every chance that they could create a spiritual revolution within the sinful world. That had been the hope of Śrīla

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and Bhaktivedānta Swami expressed that hope in his Vyāsa-pūjā offering.

When will that day come when a temple will be established in every house in every corner of the world?

When will the high-court judge be a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava with *tilaka* beautifully decorating his forehead?

When will a Vaiṣṇava winning votes be elected president of the land and preaching be spread everywhere?

As he read the poem, its truth exploding in the midst of the gathering of aging *sannyāsīs*, some approved, and some were incensed. Their meeting, however, took no new direction; they did not sit down together and plan as he had pleaded. Swami Mahārāja's poem was taken as another poetic expression or as an opinion. The Godbrothers were inclined to let the old wounds heal with the passing of time. To go back over the whole thing again and reconstruct the mission as it had been before, when Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had been present, and to attempt all those ambitious programs—how was it possible? They were getting old. Some did not want to leave the shelter of Vṛndāvana. They would worship Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī within the holy *dhāma*. If Bhaktivedānta Swami could do something more, let him go ahead and try.

Bhaktivedānta Swami returned to Keśi-ghāṭa, thoughtful. For many years he had been unable to take a leading part in the mission because of family commitments. In 1935, in Bombay, his Gobrothers had even asked him to be president of the *maṭha* there, but Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had said that it was not necessary that Abhay Charan join them; he would come in his own way. Now, by the grace of his spiritual master, he was ready to fulfill the meaning of *sannyāsa*. The Kṛṣṇa-conscious world he had described in his poem was not a utopia, presented merely to incite his Godbrothers, a dreamer's talk of the impossible. It was possible. But in any case, he had to write and print Kṛṣṇa-conscious books and preach abroad. It was what Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī wanted. If his Godbrothers would not do it jointly, then he would do it.

In January of 1961 one of Bhaktivedanta Swami's Delhi acquaintances had shown him an announcement for the Congress for Cultivating Human Spirit, a convention to be held in Tokyo, May 10-20. The theme was world peace through cultivating human spirit. International participants were invited. As soon as Bhaktivedanta Swami had seen it, he had wanted to go. Although his main interest had always been the U.S., if Japan presented itself first, why not? And their invitation was in English. If they accepted his reservation, they would pay for his board and lodging at the convention hotel, although he would have to pay his own travel expenses.

Bhaktivedanta Swami wrote to the sponsors, the International Foundation for Cultural Harmony, and proposed a speech, "How Should One Cultivate Human Spirit?" The secretary general of the foundation, Mr. Toshihiro Nakano, wrote back to him at Keśi-ghāṭa, expressing his high regard both for Indian spiritual culture and for his proposed presentation. Mr. Nakano also enclosed an official certificate, as he had requested, stating that Bhaktivedanta Swami was a bona fide visitor to their convention whose expenses in Japan would be paid. They requested—"To Whom It May Concern"—that his passport and visa be granted in time for his May 10 arrival in Japan.

Bhaktivedanta Swami then conceived a special project for the convention. The Tenth Canto, Twentieth Chapter, of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* presents a description of autumn in Vṛndāvana, and for each seasonal phenomenon the *Bhāgavatam* presents a parallel teaching from the *Vedas*. For example, it compares the dark, cloudy evening of the rainy autumn season to the present Age of Kali, when the bright stars of Vedic wisdom (the saints and scriptures) are temporarily obscured by a godless civilization. The chapter contains dozens of such examples, and Bhaktivedanta Swami proposed fifty commentaries to accompany fifty illustrations to be displayed at the convention. He began preparing the commentaries, which he entitled "The Light of Bhagwat." He wrote directions from which an artist could design a painting to go with each "Lesson from the Picture." Fifty pictures and commentaries, Bhaktivedanta Swami felt, would make an impressive display for visitors at the convention. The convention organizers liked the idea.

As for your proposal to get pictures drawing by artists according to your suggestion, the institution department of the congress will immediately

take people disposal for it under the full consideration of about some specimen idea of picture which will be given to us by you, so I should like to get them as soon as possible.

Bhaktivedanta Swami worked quickly to produce a twenty-thousand-word manuscript—fifty lessons for fifty illustrations. The pictures were to depict the forests, fields, and skies of Vṛndāvana during the rainy season, and the lessons were sometimes criticisms of godless governments, materialists, and false religionists, sometimes assertions of moral principles and God consciousness, and sometimes depictions of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His eternal associates in Vṛndāvana.

Everything went smoothly between Bhaktivedanta Swami and the sponsors in Japan. The problem was to raise the travel fare. He approached the likely sources, writing to the central government's Ministry for Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs; he presented his certificate from Mr. Nakano and explained his position as a *sannyāsī*. In late March the ministry sent him a form to complete and return. Time was getting short. On March 29 he wrote the vice president, Dr. Radhakrishnan, with whom he had a speaking acquaintance (as well as a philosophical difference).

You know that I am a Sannyasi without any relation with Bank, neither I am attached with financing institution. But the Japanese organisers have liked my literatures and they want me to be present there.

He pleaded that since the great *ācāryas* of India had formerly presented their knowledge for the benefit of the world, the Indian government to-day should send representatives of the *ācāryas* "to deliver the message of Atma or the Human Spirit." He also wrote the deputy manager of Scindia Steam Navigation Company in Bombay, reminding him of his 1958 offer to give a fifty-percent concession on a ticket to the United States. After explaining his invitation from Mr. Nakano in Japan, Bhaktivedanta Swami pointed out that the full round-trip fare to Japan would be less than half the fare to the United States.

Trying all possibilities at once, and with less than a month and a half before the convention, he wrote to another potential donor, Mr. Brijratan S. Mohatta, who had once expressed his willingness to send Bhakti-

vedanta Swami to South America when an Indian sponsor there had written expressing interest. At that time, Bhaktivedanta Swami had been unable to get the proper certification from the Indian government. But here, he explained, was a new opportunity to present the message of the Vedic literature to an international gathering of interested people; and passage to Japan was less than to South America. On the same day he wrote to Mr. Mohatta he also mailed his completed form to the Ministry for Scientific Research. In answer to their question as to why he was asking for a donation and whether he had done so before, he replied:

Before this I never asked the Ministry for any financial assistance as there was no need for it. As Sannyasi I can ask for financial help when there is absolute necessity. Our life is dedicated to render service to the humanity at large for reviving the dormant spiritual consciousness.

Meanwhile, his other arrangements proceeded with full cooperation from Japan. He had already sent Mr. Nakano the first twenty illustrative ideas from "The Light of Bhagwat." "Japan is famous for artistic work," he wrote, "and India is famous for spiritual culture. We should now combine. . . ." He suggested they also print the text and pictures as a book.

Mr. Nakano assured Bhaktivedanta Swami that they would be eager to meet him at Haneda airport; they would be readily recognizable, since they would be holding a flag. And if he liked, he could stay in Japan for an entire month and hold local meetings after the scheduled convention. Mr. Nakano also asked a favor of Bhaktivedanta Swami. To solidify relations with the mayors of three Japanese cities, he asked that Bhaktivedanta Swami send letters to the mayors, requesting their full support of the Human Spirit Congress. Bhaktivedanta Swami immediately complied.

By now it was April, and no money had come. Finally, after a personal interview in which he received a definite no from Dr. Radhakrishnan, Bhaktivedanta Swami turned to Mr. Nakano in disappointment. On April 18 he wrote:

I am in due receipt of your letter of the 9th instant and I am grateful to you for all that you have said for me. I am a humble creature and I am just trying to do my bit in this connection because I was so ordered by my spiritual master, Shri Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Maharaj. . . .

While I am feeling too much ecstasy for the reception arrangement you are doing for me, I beg to inform you that my passage expenses which is near about Rs. 3500/- is not yet settled. I submitted one application to the Govt. of India for help and the copy of my application is also sent herewith. I also wrote a private letter to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in this connection and the reply which I have received is also enclosed herewith.

All these are not very encouraging for me. I therefore saw the Vice President today personally but he says the same thing as he has written in his letter. Although the matter is not yet hopeless altogether I am disturbed in my mind thinking what shall I do in case the Govt. denies to help. I am therefore seeking your good advice in this connection. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan said to me that you had also invited him to attend your congress and he opines that the passage expenses might have been paid by you.

The hope and expectation of the congress is undoubtedly very great and I wish that I may fully utilise this opportunity for general welfare of the entire human society. I have fully explained my views authoritatively in my statements already sent to you for publication and the gist idea is expressed in the letter of the Mayors, the copy of which is also enclosed.

As a Sannyasi, I have no personal purse for expenditure. Under the circumstances if the Government denies to help for the passage then I will have to ask for the same from you otherwise my going to the congress will end in dream only. I have very little faith in the dealings of the politicians and specially of the Indian politicians.

From the conversation of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, it appeared to me that the Govt. does not approve of such congress as are organised by private persons and as such they do not participate in such congress. I shall wait for the final decision for one week more when the matter will be clear, yes or no.

Replies from prospective donors in India were all negative. On April 20, he cabled Mr. Nakano.

As you have developed a deep love for me, I dare to ask you to send me financial help to take me to Japan. I think you can immediately instruct your Embassy in Delhi to do the needful and dispatch me to Japan on your behalf. I am feeling too much to meet you and the congress so that we can build up a solid institute for spiritual cultivation. I shall await your instruction by cable to fix up my programme.

But Mr. Nakano could not help. And Bhaktivedanta Swami's effort ended in a dream only.

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In July 1962 Bhaktivedanta Swami changed his Vṛndāvana residence from Varṇśī-gopālajī temple to Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. For three years he had been paying the rent of five rupees per month for his Rādhā-Dāmodara rooms and paying for the extensive repairs. Now the main room had electric lighting and a fan, and the walls had been plastered and painted. The room was seven feet by fifteen feet, with smooth plaster walls and a floor of sandstone squares of uneven sizes, the same as the stone tiles cemented in front of the *samādhi* of Rūpa Gosvāmī. The room was furnished with a small, low desk, a *kuśa* mat, and a wooden cot with a rope-woven surface to lie on. The view was not the panorama he had enjoyed at Keśi-ghāṭa, and the neighborhood was not so secluded, but now, without even moving from his room, he could look into the temple and see a portion of the altar and the four-foot-high form of Vṛndāvana-candra, the black marble Kṛṣṇa Deity Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja had worshiped hundreds of years ago. The main room was connected to the kitchen by a ten-foot-long veranda, which faced the courtyard, and from his kitchen he could see the *samādhi* of Rūpa Gosvāmī. So the place was superior to his room at the Varṇśī-gopālajī temple, because now he was living in the temple of Jīva Gosvāmī, where great souls like the Gosvāmīs Rūpa, Sanātana, Raghunātha, and Jīva had all gathered, taken *prasādam*, chanted, and discussed Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya. It was the best place to work on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

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At 1:00 A.M., when no one else was up and it was very quiet, Bhaktivedanta Swami would wake and begin writing. Since electric failures were not uncommon in Vṛndāvana, he would often work by lantern light. But in any case, a beam of light would shine out from his room onto the veranda, while inside the room he worked under its brightness.

While he wrote in stillness, sometimes a toad, as dry as the stone floor, would hop out of hiding and across the floor, exiting through the cement latticework of the opposite wall. Sometimes a tiny mouse would run out from behind a window shutter and hide in another place. Otherwise, the room was complete sanctified stillness, and the inspiration of being in the presence of the six Gosvāmīs was strong. Above the open courtyard, the sky would be full of clearly visible stars. As he worked, the only sounds would come from the town, perhaps of a dog barking in the distance.

At 4:00 A.M., the temple *pūjārī*, who slept under a shelter near the Deity doors, would awake, turn on an electric light and, with a long pole, clear the bats from the rafters. At 5:00 A.M., after waking the Deities, the *pūjārī* would open the doors before the altar and begin *maṅgala-ārati*. He would offer a flame while a few resident devotees gathered and chanted, playing instruments; usually someone would bang a gong while someone else rang a large bell.

Any sound from the courtyard carried immediately to Bhaktivedanta Swami's quarters, and the clanging bell and gong would suddenly reverberate against the walls of his small room. From his sitting place, he could see only Vṛndāvana-candra, on the left of the altar. Sometimes he would pause at his work and walk into the courtyard to see the Deities and Their *ārati*. The altar was filled with Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa who had been worshiped by Jīva Gosvāmī and other Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* hundreds of years ago. After ten minutes, the *pūjārī*, having offered the flame and then a conchshell filled with water, would turn and sprinkle offered water on the heads of the devotees, and the ceremony would end.

After working a few hours on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Bhaktivedanta Swami would sit in his room and chant *japa*. As the morning sky turned light blue, the stars would vanish, and residents of Vṛndāvana would arrive to visit the Deities and the *samādhis* of the Gosvāmīs. Old women would enter the temple, calling out, "Jaya Rādhē" in broken voices.

When Bhaktivedanta Swami opened the shutters, his room would fill with light. His windows faced a courtyard, but they were not so much windows as cement latticework in the wall; although passersby could not easily see into the room, the latticework allowed light to enter. In the morning light, the room was clearly revealed: the arched ceiling, the freshly painted walls with arched niches, the floor of inlaid stone. Bhaktivedanta Swami's thin *sannyāsa daṇḍa*, wrapped in heavy saffron

khādī, leaned against one corner of the room. On one shelf he had placed a picture of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, on another a stack of books and manuscripts. The room's two doors appeared flimsy even when locked, and the whole room tilted slightly to the left. It was bare but peaceful.

Often, sitting on the veranda between the two rooms, he would view the courtyard, the altar, and the Deities. Rādhā-Dāmodara, Vṛndāvana-candra, and several other Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities awaited Their visitors. During the morning, the Deity doors remained open as a regular file of visitors turned the temple into a bustling place of pilgrimage. No one stayed very long. Some had rigid schedules to visit many temples and hurried on. Poor people and also local businessmen, their wives in colorful *sārīs*—all devotees—headed towards the altar, calling, “Jaya ho,” “Jaya Rādhē!” After greeting the Deities, they would disappear through the door to the outdoor area of the temple compound to visit the *samādhis*.

Although in Vṛndāvana there were hundreds of small templelike tombs honoring past Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, Bhaktivedānta Swami regularly visited the chief *samādhis*, those of Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī. Within a separate area of the temple compound were the *bhajana-kuṭīr* and the *samādhi* of Rūpa Gosvāmī. Bhaktivedānta Swami often sat chanting *japa* before Rūpa Gosvāmī's *samādhi*. The line of pilgrims from the temple would continue entering the outdoor area of the compound, coming to offer *daṇḍavats* to Rūpa Gosvāmī. Most pilgrims considered this the most important feature of their visit to Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, and even if they offered respect nowhere else, they would stop before the *samādhi* of Rūpa Gosvāmī. They would stop with folded hands and bow, chanting Jaya Rādhē or, with their hands in their bead bags, chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, circumambulating the *samādhi*.

Bhaktivedānta Swami would sit and chant even after the early-morning rush of visitors, or sometimes he would walk to the nearby temples of Rādhā-Śyāmasundara or Rādhā-Madana-mohana, always returning by eleven to cook his meal. As he cooked, and later as he sat to take his *prasādam*, he could see through the latticework the *samādhi* of Rūpa Gosvāmī. Feeling Rūpa Gosvāmī's presence, he would think of his own mission for his spiritual master.

The devotees of Lord Caitanya are known as *rūpānugas*, followers of

Rūpa Gosvāmī; without following the teachings and example of Rūpa Gosvāmī, one cannot enter the path of pure devotion to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was especially known as a strict *rūpānuga*, as described in the Sanskrit prayers written in his honor: “I offer my respectful obeisances unto Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, the personified energy of Śrī Caitanya’s mercy, who delivers devotional service enriched with conjugal love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, coming exactly in the line of revelation of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. I offer my respectful obeisances unto you, who are the personified teachings of Lord Caitanya. You are the deliverer of the fallen souls. You do not tolerate any statement that is against the teachings of devotional service enunciated by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.”

Bhaktivedānta Swami’s spiritual master and the previous spiritual masters in the disciplic succession had wanted the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to spread all over the world, and as Bhaktivedānta Swami daily gathered inspiration, sitting before Rūpa Gosvāmī’s *samādhi*, he prayed to his spiritual predecessors for guidance. The intimate direction he received from them was an absolute dictation, and no government, no publisher, nor anyone else could shake or diminish it. Rūpa Gosvāmī wanted him to go to the West; Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī wanted him to go to the West; Kṛṣṇa had arranged that he be brought to Rādhā-Dāmodara temple to receive their blessings. At the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, he felt he had entered an eternal residence known only to pure devotees of the Lord. Yet although they were allowing him to associate intimately with them in the place of their pastimes, they were ordering him to leave—to leave Rādhā-Dāmodara and Vṛndāvana and to deliver the message of the *ācāryas* to forgetful parts of the world.

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In June the weather became intolerably hot, and one could not remain active through the afternoon. During the most oppressive hours, Bhaktivedānta Swami would shut his doors and shutters and run the overhead fan. By evening the heat would abate, again a flurry of visitors would arrive, and in the temple compound there would be evening *kīrtanas*. Sitting on his veranda, Bhaktivedānta Swami would sometimes talk with

visitors, or sometimes they would come to his door and observe him as he worked at his typewriter. He was known in Vṛndāvana as a scholar and a sublime devotee. But he kept to himself as much as possible, especially in the summer of 1962, working on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

That was his real purpose in coming here: to prepare the books he could distribute to the people of the West. Although as yet he had no means for traveling even as far as Japan, and no means for printing books, these were the goals for which he worked. He had not come to Vṛndāvana to die and return to Godhead. Rather, he had come because it was the ideal place to gain spiritual strength for his main life's work. The exact shape of his future mission Bhaktivedanta Swami did not know, but he did know that he must prepare himself for preaching *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to the English-speaking Western world. He must become a perfectly equipped instrument of his masters. And if they desired, they would send him.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Dream Come True

I planned that I must go to America. Generally they go to London, but I did not want to go to London. I was simply thinking how to go to New York. I was scheming, "Whether I shall go this way, through Tokyo, Japan, or that way? Which way is cheaper?" That was my proposal. And I was targeting to New York always. Sometimes I was dreaming that I have come to New York.

—Śrīla Prabhupāda

Writing was only half the battle; the other half was publishing. Both Bhaktivedanta Swami and his spiritual master wanted to see *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* printed in English and distributed widely. According to the teachings of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, the most modern methods of printing and distributing books should be used to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Although many books of Vaiṣṇava wisdom had already been perfectly presented by Rūpa Gosvāmī, Sanātana Gosvāmī, and Jīva Gosvāmī, the manuscripts now sat deteriorating in the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple and other locations, and even the Gaudiya Math's printings of the Gosvāmīs' works were not being widely distributed. One of Bhaktivedanta Swami's Godbrothers asked him why he was spending so much time and effort trying to make a new commentary on the *Bhāgavatam*, since so many great *ācāryas* had already commented upon it. But in Bhaktivedanta Swami's mind there was no question; his spiritual master had given him an order.

Commercial publishers, however, were not interested in the sixty-volume *Bhāgavatam* series, and Bhaktivedanta Swami was not interested in anything less than a sixty-volume *paramparā* presentation of verses, synonyms, and purports based on the commentaries of the previous *ācāryas*. But to publish such books he would have to raise private donations and publish at his own expense. Rādhā-Dāmodara temple may have been the best place for writing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, but not for printing and publishing it. For that he would have to go to New Delhi.

Among his Delhi contacts, Bhaktivedanta Swami considered Hitsaran Sharma a likely helper. Although when he had stayed in Mr. Sharma's home Mr. Sharma had appreciated him more as a member of a genre than as an individual, at least Mr. Sharma was inclined to help *sādhus*, and he recognized Bhaktivedanta Swami as a genuinely religious person. Therefore, when Bhaktivedanta Swami approached him in his office, he was willing to help, considering it a religious duty to propagate *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Hitsaran Sharma was qualified to help for two reasons: he was the secretary to J. D. Dalmia, a wealthy philanthropist, and he was the owner of a commercial printing works, Radha Press. According to Mr. Sharma, Mr. Dalmia would not directly give money to Bhaktivedanta Swami, even if his secretary suggested it. Mr. Sharma therefore advised Bhaktivedanta Swami to go to Gorakhpur and show his manuscript to Hanuman Prasad Poddar, a religious publisher. Accepting this as good advice, Bhaktivedanta Swami journeyed to Gorakhpur, some 475 miles from Delhi.

Even such a trip as this constituted a financial strain. Bhaktivedanta Swami's daily ledger showed a balance of one hundred and thirty rupees as of August 8, 1962, the day he started for Gorakhpur. By the time he reached Lucknow he was down to fifty-seven rupees. Travel from Lucknow to Gorakhpur cost another six rupees, and the ricksha to Mr. Poddar's home cost eighty paise.

But the trip was well worth the cost. Bhaktivedanta Swami presented Mr. Poddar with his letter of introduction from Hitsaran Sharma and then showed him his manuscript. After briefly examining the manuscript, Mr. Poddar concluded it to be a highly developed work that should be supported. He agreed to send a donation of four thousand rupees to the Dalmia Trust in Delhi, to be used towards the publication

of Śrī A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami's *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Indian printers do not always require full payment before they begin a job, provided they receive a substantial advance payment. After the job is printed and bound, a customer who has not made the complete payment takes a portion of books commensurate to what he has paid, and after selling those books he uses his profit to buy more. Bhaktivedanta Swami estimated that printing one volume would cost seven thousand rupees. So he was three thousand short. He raised a few hundred rupees more by going door to door throughout Delhi. Then he went back to Radha Press and asked Hitsaran Sharma to begin. Mr. Sharma agreed.

Radha Press had already produced much of the first two chapters when Bhaktivedanta Swami objected that the type was not large enough. He wanted twelve-point type, but the Radha Press had only ten-point. So Mr. Sharma agreed to take the work to another printer, Mr. Gautam Sharma of O. K. Press.

In printing Bhaktivedanta Swami's Volume One of the First Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, O. K. Press printed four book pages twice on a side of one sheet of paper twenty by twenty-six inches. But before running the full eleven hundred copies, they would print a proof, which Bhaktivedanta Swami would read. Then, following the corrected proofs, the printers would correct the hand-set type and run a second proof, which Bhaktivedanta would also read. Usually he would also find errors on the second proof; if so, they would print a third. If he found no errors on the third proof, they would then print the final pages. At this pace Bhaktivedanta Swami was able to order small quantities of paper as he could afford it—from six to ten reams at a time, ordered two weeks in advance.

Even as the volume was being printed, he was still writing the last chapters. When the proofs were ready at O. K. Press, he would pick up the proofs, return to his room at Chippiwada, correct the proofs, and then return them. Sometimes fourteen-year-old Kantvedi, who lived at the Chippiwada temple with his parents, would carry the proofs back and forth for the Swami. But in the last months of 1962, Bhaktivedanta Swami usually made a daily walk to O. K. Press.

His walk through the tight, crowded lanes of Chippiwada soon led him to a road close to the Jama Mosque, and that road led into the noisy, heavily trafficked Chawri Bazaar. The neighborhood was a busy paper district, where laborers with ropes strapped across their shoulders pulled

stout wooden carts, heavily loaded with stacks of paper, on small iron wheels. For two blocks, paper dealers were the only businesses—Hari Ram Gupta and Company, Roop Chand and Sons, Bengal Paper Mill Company Limited, Universal Traders, Janta Paper Mart—one after another even down the side alleys.

The neighborhood storefronts were colorful and disorderly. Pedestrian traffic was so hectic that for a person to dally even for a moment would cause a disruption. Carts and rickshas carried paper and other goods back and forth through the streets. Sometimes a laborer would jog past with a hefty stack of pages on his head, the stack weighing down on either end. Traffic was swift, and an unmindful or slow-footed pedestrian risked being struck by a load protruding from the head of a bearer or from a passing cart. Occasionally a man would be squatting on the roadside, smashing chunks of coal into small pieces to sell. Tiny corner smoke shops drew small gatherings of customers for cigarettes or *pān*. The shopkeeper would rapidly spread the *pān* spices on a betel leaf, and the customer would walk off down the street chewing the *pān* and spitting out red-stained saliva.

Amidst this milieu, as the Chawri Bazaar commercial district blended into tenement life and children played in the hazardous streets, Bhaktivedanta Swami was a gentle-looking yet determined figure. As he walked past the tenements, the tile sellers, the grain sellers, the sweet shops, and the printers, overhead would be electric wires, pigeons, and the clotheslines from the tenement balconies. Finally he would come to O. K. Press, directly across from a small mosque. He would come, carrying the corrected proofs, to anxiously oversee the printing work.

After four months, when the whole book had been printed and the sheets were stacked on the floor of the press, Mr. Hitsaran Sharma arranged for the work to be moved to a bindery. The binding was done by an ancient operation, mostly by hand, and it took another month. Bhaktivedanta Swami would come and observe the workers. A row of men sat in a small room, surrounded by stacks of printed paper. The first man would take one of the large printed sheets, rapidly fold it twice, and pass it to the next man, who performed the next operation. The pages would be folded, stitched, and collated, then put into a vise and hammered

together before being trimmed on three sides with a handsaw and glued. Bit by bit, the book would be prepared for the final hard cover.

In addition to his visits to O. K. Press and the bindery, Bhaktivedanta Swami would also occasionally travel by bus across the Yamunā River to Mr. Hitsaran Sharma's Radha Press. The Radha Press was printing one thousand dust jackets for the volume.

Hitsaran Sharma: *Swamiji was going hither and thither. He was getting whatever collections he could and depositing them. And he was always mixing with many persons, going hither and thither. With me he was very fond that I should do everything as soon as possible. He had a great haste. He used to say, "Time is going, time is going. Quick, do it!" He would be annoyed with me also, and he would have me do his work first. But I was in the service of Dalmia, and I would tell him, "Your work has to be secondary for me." But he would say, "Now you have wasted my two days. What is this, Sharmaji? I am coming here, I told you in the morning to do this, and you have not done it even now." But I would reply, "I have got no time during the day." Then he would say, "Then you have wasted my complete day." So he was very much pressing me. This was his temperament.*

The binding was reddish, the color of an earthen brick, and was inlaid with gold lettering. Bhaktivedanta Swami had designed the dust jacket himself, and he had commissioned a young Bengali artist named Salit to execute it. It was a wraparound picture of the entire spiritual and material manifestations. Dominating the front cover was a pink lotus, and within its whorl were Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and Their pastimes in Vṛndāvana, along with Lord Caitanya chanting and dancing with His associates. From Kṛṣṇa's lotus planet emanated yellow rays of light, and in that effulgence were many spiritual planets, appearing like so many suns. Sitting within each planet was a different four-armed form of Nārāyaṇa, each with His name lettered beneath the planet: Trivikrama, Keśava, Puruṣottama, and so on. Within an oval at the bottom of the front cover, Mahā-Viṣṇu was exhaling the material universes. On the inside cover was Bhaktivedanta Swami's explanation of the cover illustration.

When the printing and binding were completed, there were eleven hundred copies. Bhaktivedanta Swami would receive one hundred copies, and the printer would keep the balance. From the sale of the one

hundred copies, Bhaktivedanta Swami would continue to pay off his debt to the printer and binder; then he would receive another supply of books. This would continue until he had finished paying his debt. His plan was to then publish a second volume from the profits of the first, and a third volume from the profits of the second.

Kantvedi went to pick up the first one hundred copies. He hired a man who put the books in large baskets, placed them on his hand truck, and then hauled them through the streets to the Chippiwada temple, where Bhaktivedanta Swami stacked them in his room on a bench.

Bhaktivedanta Swami went out alone to sell his books and present them to important people. Dr. Radhakrishnan, who gave him a personal audience, agreed to read the book and write his opinion. Hanuman Prasad Poddar was the first to write a favorable review:

It is a source of great pleasure for me that a long cherished dream has materialised and is going to be materialised with this and the would-be publications. I thank the Lord that due to His grace this publication could see the light.

Bhaktivedanta Swami went to the major libraries, universities, and schools in Delhi, where the librarians found him "calm and quiet," "noble," "polite," "scholarly," "with a specific glow in him." Traveling on foot, he visited school administration offices throughout Delhi and placed copies in more than forty schools in the Delhi area. The Ministry of Education (which had previously denied him assistance) placed an order for fifty copies for selected university and institutional libraries throughout India. The ministry paid him six hundred rupees plus packing and postage charges, and Bhaktivedanta Swami mailed the books to the designated libraries. The U. S. embassy purchased eighteen copies, to be distributed in America through the Library of Congress.

The institutional sales were brisk, but then sales slowed. As the only agent, Bhaktivedanta Swami was now spending hours just to sell a few copies. He was eager to print the second volume, yet until enough money came from the first, he could not print. In the meantime he continued

translating and writing purports. Writing so many volumes was a huge task that would take many years. And at his present rate, with sales so slow, he would not be able to complete the work in his lifetime.

Although there were many who took part in the production of the book and still others who became customers, only Bhaktivedanta Swami deeply experienced the successes and failures of the venture. It was his project, and he was responsible. No one was eager to see him writing prolifically, and no one demanded that it be printed. Even when the sales slowed to a trickle, the managers of O. K. Press were not distressed; they would give him the balance of his books only when he paid for them. And since it was also he who had the burden of hiring O. K. Press to print a second volume, the pressure was on him to go out and sell as many copies of the first volume as possible. For Hanuman Prasad Poddar, the volume had been something to admire in passing; for Hitaran Sharma, it had been something he had tended to *after* his day's work for Mr. Dalmia; for the boy who lived at Chippiwada, the book had meant a few errands; for the paper dealers it had meant a small order; for Dr. Radhakrishnan it had been but the slightest, soon-forgotten matter in a life crammed with national politics and Hindu philosophizing. But Bhaktivedanta Swami, by his full engagement in producing the *Bhāgavatam*, felt bliss and assurance that Kṛṣṇa was pleased. He did not, however, intend for the *Bhāgavatam* to be his private affair. It was the sorely needed medicine for the ills of Kali-yuga, and it was not possible for only one man to administer it. Yet he *was* alone, and he felt exclusive pleasure and satisfaction in serving his *guru* and Lord Kṛṣṇa. Thus his transcendental frustration and pleasure mingled, his will strengthened, and he continued alone.

His spiritual master, the previous spiritual masters, and the Vedic scriptures all assured him that he was right. If a person got a copy of the *Bhāgavatam* and read even one page, he might decide to take part in Lord Caitanya's movement. If a person seriously read the book, he would be convinced about spiritual life. The more this book could be distributed, the more the people could understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And if they understood Kṛṣṇa consciousness, they would become liberated from all problems. Bookselling was real preaching. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had wanted it, even at the neglect of constructing temples or

making followers. Who could preach as well as *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*? Certainly whoever spent sixteen rupees for a book would also take the time at least to look at it.

In the months that followed, Bhaktivedanta Swami received more favorable reviews. The prestigious *Adyar Library Bulletin* gave a full review, noting “the editor’s vast and deep study of the subject” and concluding, “Further volumes of this publication are eagerly awaited.”

His scholarly Godbrothers also wrote their appreciations. Swami Bon Mahārāja, rector of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy in Vṛndāvana, wrote:

I have nothing but admiration for your bold and practical venture. If you should be able to complete the whole work, you will render a very great service to the cause of Prabhupada Sri Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Maharaj, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and the country also. Do it and rest assured there will be no scarcity of resources.

Bhaktisāraṅga Mahārāja wrote a full review in his *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*.

We expect that this particular English version of Srimad Bhagwatam will be widely read and thereby spiritual poverty of people in general may be removed forever. At a time when we need it very greatly, Srimad Bhaktivedanta Swami has given us the right thing. We recommend this publication for everyone’s serious study.

Sri Biswanath Das, governor of Uttar Pradesh, commended the volume to all thoughtful people. And *Economic Review* praised the author for attempting a tremendous task.

At a time when not only the people of India but those of the West need the chastening quality of love and truth in the corrupting atmosphere of hate and hypocrisy, **a work like this will have uplifting and corrective influence.**

Dr. Zakir Hussain, vice president of India, wrote:

I have read your book *Srimad Bhagwatam* with great interest and much profit. I thank you again for the kind thought which must have prompted you to present it to me.

The favorable reviews, although Bhaktivedanta Swami could not pay the printer with them, indicated a serious response; the book was valuable. And subsequent volumes would earn the series even more respect. By Kṛṣṇa's grace, Bhaktivedanta Swami had already completed many of the translations and purports for Volume Two. Even in the last weeks of printing the first volume, he had been writing day and night for the second volume. It was glorification of the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, and therefore it would require many, many volumes. He felt impelled to praise Kṛṣṇa and describe Him in more and more volumes. Śrīla Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī had said that the presses of the world could not print fast enough the glories of Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual world that were being received at every moment by pure devotees.

Bhaktivedanta Swami decided to return to Vṛndāvana for several months of intensive writing on Volume Two. This was his real business at Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. Vṛndāvana was the best place for writing transcendental literature; that had already been demonstrated by the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* of the past. Living in simple ease, taking little rest and food, he continually translated the verses and composed his Bhaktivedanta purports for Volume Two. After a few months, after amassing enough manuscript pages, he would return to Delhi and once again enter the world of publishing.

In Volume One he had covered the first six-and-a-half chapters of the First Canto. The second volume began on page 365 with the eighth verse of the Seventh Chapter. Bhaktivedanta Swami wrote in his purport that the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was meant for *paramahamsas*, persons engaged purely in self-realization. "Yet," he wrote, "it works into the depth of the heart of those who may be worldly men. Worldly men are all engaged

in the matter of sense gratification. But even such men also will find in this Vedic literature a remedial measure for their material diseases."

Bhaktivedanta Swami returned to Delhi to raise funds for printing Volume Two. When he visited a prospective donor, he would show the man Volume One and the growing collection of reviews, explaining that he was asking a donation not to support himself but to print this important literature. Although for the first volume he had received no donations equal to the four thousand rupees he had received from Mr. Poddar, an executive in the L & H Sugar factory gave a donation of five thousand rupees for Volume Two.

Bhaktivedanta Swami had been dissatisfied with Hitsaran Sharma as a production supervisor. Although supposedly an expert in the trade, Hitsaran had caused delays, and sometimes he had advised Gautam Sharma without consulting Bhaktivedanta Swami. The work on Volume One had slowed and even stopped when a job from a cash customer had come up, and Bhaktivedanta Swami had complained that it was Hitsaran's fault for not giving money to O. K. Press on time. For Volume Two, Bhaktivedanta Swami decided to deal directly with O. K. Press and supervise the printing himself. He spoke to Gautam Sharma and offered a partial payment. Although the majority of the copies of Volume One were still standing on their printing floor, Bhaktivedanta Swami wanted O. K. Press to begin Volume Two. Gautam Sharma accepted the job.

It was early in 1964 when Volume Two went to press, following the same steps as Volume One. But this time Bhaktivedanta Swami was more actively present, pushing. To avoid delays, he purchased the paper himself. At Siddho Mal and Sons Paper Merchants, in the heart of the paper district, he would choose and order his paper and then arrange to transport it to O. K. Press. If the order was a large one he would have it carried by cart; smaller orders he would send by ricksha or on the head of a bearer.

In his Preface to the second volume, Bhaktivedanta Swami expressed the apparent oddity of working in Delhi while living in Vṛndāvana.

"The path of fruitive activities i.e. to say **the path of earn money and enjoy life**, as it is going on generally, appears to have become also our profession although we have renounced the order of worldly life!

They see that we are moving in the cities, in the Government offices, banks and other business places for promoting the publication of **Srimad Bhagwatam**. They also see that we are moving in the press, paper market and amongst the book binders also away from our residence at Vrindaban, and thus they conclude sometimes mistakenly that we are also doing the same business in the dress of a mendicant!

“But actually there is a gulf of difference between the two kinds of activities. This is not a business for maintaining an establishment of material enjoyment. On the contrary it is an humble attempt to broadcast the glories of the Lord at a time when the people need it very badly.”

He went on to describe how in former days, even fifty years ago, well-to-do members of society had commissioned *paṇḍitas* to print or hand-write the *Bhāgavatam* and then distribute copies amongst the devotees and the general people. But times had changed. “At the present moment the time is so changed that we had to request one of the biggest industrialists of India, to purchase 100 (one hundred) copies and distribute them but the poor fellow expressed his inability. We wished that somebody may come forward to pay for the actual cost of publication of this *Srimad Bhagwatam* and let them be distributed free to all the leading gentlemen of the world. But nobody is so far prepared to do this social uplifting work.”

After thanking the Ministry of Education and the director of education for distributing copies to institutions and libraries, Bhaktivedanta Swami again stated his predicament before his reading public. “The problem is that we must get some money for completing the work which is admittedly a mighty project. The sales proceeds are being employed in the promotional work and not in sense gratification. Herein lies the difference from the fruitive activities. And for all this we have to approach everyone concerned just like a businessman. There is no harm to become a businessman if it is done on account of the Lord as much as there was no harm to become a violent warrior like Arjuna or Hanumanji if such belligerent activities are executed to satisfy the desires of the Supreme Lord.

“So even though we are not in the Himalayas, even though we talk of business, even though we deal in rupees and paisa, still, simply because we are 100 per cent servants of the Lord and are engaged in the service of broadcasting the message of His glories, certainly we shall transcend

and get through the invincible impasse of *Maya* and reach the effulgent kingdom of God to render Him face to face eternal service, in full bliss and knowledge. We are confident of this factual position and we may also assure to our numerous readers that they will also achieve the same result simply by hearing the glories of the Lord.”

On receipt of the first copies of the second volume—another four-hundred-page, clothbound, brick-colored *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, with the same dust jacket as Volume One—Bhaktivedanta Swami made the rounds of the institutions, scholars, politicians, and booksellers. One Delhi bookseller, Dr. Manoharlal Jain, had particular success in selling the volumes.

Manoharlal Jain: *He would come to me for selling his books. He would come often, and he used to chat with me for one or two hours. He had no other business except selling his books as much as possible. We would discuss the difficulties he was having and also many other things—yoga, Vedānta, and religious aspects of life. His problem was distributing his work, because it was a big publication. He had planned to publish it in many volumes. Naturally, I told him it was not possible for any individual bookseller or publisher here to publish it and invest money in it. So that was a little bit of a disappointment for him because he could not bring out more volumes.*

But my sales were good because this was the best translation—Sanskrit text with English translations. No other such edition was available. I sold about one hundred and fifty to two hundred copies in about two or three years. The price was very little, only sixteen rupees. He had published his reviews, and he had a good sell, a good market. The price was reasonable, and he was not interested in making money out of it. He was printing in English, for the foreigners. He had a good command of Sanskrit as well as English. When we met, we would speak in English, and his English was very impressive.

He wanted me to publish, but I didn't have any presses and no finances. I told him frankly I would not be able to publish it, because it was not one or two volumes but many. But he managed anyhow. I referred him to Atmaram and Sons. He also used to go there.

He was a great master, a philosopher, a great scholar. I used to enjoy the talks. He used to sit with me for one or two hours, as much as he could

afford. Sometimes he would come in the morning, eleven or twelve, and then sometimes in the afternoon. He used to come in for money: "How many copies are sold?" So I would pay him. Practically, he was not doing very well with finances at that time. He only wanted that his books should be sold to every library and everywhere where the people are interested in it.

We used to publish a catalog every month, and I would advertise his book. Orders would be coming from all over the world. So, at least for me, the sales were picking up. If I sold one hundred copies of the first volume, then I figured the second volume would be sold in the same number, naturally. But definitely those who would take the first volume would also take Volume Two, because it was institutional and the institutions will always try to complete their set. He used to discuss with me how the volumes can be brought out and how many it would take to complete the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He was very much interested in bringing out the whole series.

In January of 1964, Bhaktivedanta Swami was granted an interview with Indian vice president Zakir Hussain, who, although a Muslim, had written an appreciation of Bhaktivedanta Swami's Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. As Dr. Hussain cordially received the author at the presidential palace, Bhaktivedanta Swami spoke of the importance of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam in the cause of love of Godhead. But Dr. Hussain wanted to know how love of Godhead could help humanity. The question, put by ruler to sādhu, was filled with philosophical implications, but the vice president's busy schedule of meetings did not permit Bhaktivedanta Swami to answer fully. For the vice president the interview was a gesture of appreciation, recognizing the Swami for his work on behalf of India's Hindu cultural heritage. And Bhaktivedanta Swami humbly accepted the ritual.

Later, however, he wrote Dr. Hussain a long letter, answering the question he had not had time to answer during their brief meeting. "... Mussalmans [Muslims] also admit," he wrote, "that 'There is nothing greater than Allah.' The Christians also admit that 'God is Great.' ... The human society must learn to obey the laws of God." He reminded Dr. Hussain of India's great cultural asset the Vedic literature; the Indian government could perform the best welfare work for humanity by disseminating Vedic knowledge in a systematic way.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was “produced in India”; it was the substantial contribution India could offer to the world.

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In March of 1964, Krishna Pandit, Bhaktivedanta Swami’s sponsor at the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple in Chippiwada, arranged for him to reside for a few months at the Śrī Rādhāvallabhajī temple in the nearby Rosanpura Naisarak neighborhood. There he could continue his writing and publishing, but he would also be giving a series of lectures. Krishna Pandit provided Bhaktivedanta Swami about fifteen hundred rupees for his maintenance. On Bhaktivedanta Swami’s arrival at Śrī Rādhāvallabhajī temple, the manager distributed notices inviting people to “take full advantage of the presence of a Vaishnava Śaḍhu.” As “resident *ācārya*,” Bhaktivedanta Swami held morning and evening discourses at the temple, without reducing his activities of writing and printing.

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In June, Bhaktivedanta Swami got the opportunity to meet Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. The meeting had been arranged by Doladram Khannah, a wealthy jeweler who was a trustee of the Chippiwada temple and had often met with Bhaktivedanta Swami there. An old friend of Prime Minister Shastri’s since his youth, when they had attended the same *yoga* club, Mr. Khannah arranged the meeting as a favor to Bhaktivedanta Swami. Let the prime minister meet a genuine *sāḍhu*, Mr. Khannah thought.

It was a formal occasion in the gardens of the Parliament Building, and the prime minister was meeting a number of guests. Prime Minister Shastri, dressed in white *kurtā* and *dhotī* and a Nehru hat and surrounded by aides, received the elderly *sāḍhu*. Bhaktivedanta Swami, looking scholarly in his spectacles, stepped forward and introduced himself—and his book, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. As he handed the prime minister a copy of Volume One, a photographer snapped a photo of the author and the prime minister smiling over the book.

The next day, Bhaktivedanta Swami wrote to Prime Minister Shastri. He soon received a reply, personally signed by the prime minister:

Dear Swamiji, Many thanks for your Letter. I am indeed grateful to you for Presenting a copy of "Srimad Bhagwatam" to me. I do realise that you are doing valuable work. It would be good idea if the libraries in the Government Institutions purchase copies of this book.

Bhaktivedanta Swami wrote back to the prime minister, requesting him to buy books for Indian institutions. Mr. R. K. Sharma of the Ministry of Education subsequently wrote back, confirming that they would take fifty copies of Volume Two, just as they had taken Volume One.

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To concentrate on completing Volume Three, Bhaktivedanta Swami returned to the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. These were the last chapters of the First Canto, dealing with the advent of the present Age of Kali. There were many verses foretelling society's degradation and narrating how the great King Parikṣit had staved off Kali's influence by his strong Kṛṣṇa conscious rule. In his purports, Bhaktivedanta Swami wrote that government could not check corruption unless it rooted out the four basic principles of irreligion—meat-eating, illicit sex, intoxication, and gambling. "You cannot check all these evils of society simply by statutory acts of police vigilance but you have to cure the disease of mind by the proper medicine namely advocating the principles of Brahminical culture or the principles of austerity, cleanliness, mercy, and truthfulness. . . . We must always remember that false pride . . . undue attachment for woman or association with them and intoxicating habit of all . . . description will cripple the human civilisation from the path of factual peace, however the people may go on clamouring for such peace of the world."

To raise funds for Volume Three, Bhaktivedanta Swami decided to try Bombay. He traveled there in July and stayed at the Premkutir Dharmshala, a free āśrama.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *At Premkutir they received me very nicely. I was going to sell my books. Some of them were criticizing, "What kind of saṅnyāsi? He is making business bookselling." Not the authorities said this, but some of them. I was writing my book then also.*

Then I became a guest for fifteen days with a member of the Dalmia family. One of the brothers told me that he wanted to construct a little

cottage at his house: "You can live here. I will give you a nice cottage." I thought, "No, it is not good to be fully dependent and patronized by a *viṣayī* [materialist]." But I stayed for fifteen days, and he gave me exclusive use of a typewriter for writing my books.

Bhaktivedanta Swami made his rounds of the institutions and book-sellers in Bombay. He now had an advertisement showing himself with Prime Minister Shastri, and he also had the prime minister's letter and the Ministry of Education's purchase order for fifty volumes. Still, he was getting only small orders.

Then he decided to visit Sumati Morarji, head of the Scindia Steamship Company. He had heard from his Godbrothers in Bombay that she was known for helping *sādhus* and had donated to the Bombay Gaudiya Math. He had never met her, but he well remembered the 1958 promise by one of her officers to arrange half-fare passage for him to America. Now he wanted her help for printing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

But his first attempts to arrange a meeting were unsuccessful. Frustrated at being put off by Mrs. Morarji's officers, he sat down on the front steps of her office building, determined to catch her attention as she left for the day. The lone *sādhū* certainly caused some attention as he sat quietly chanting for five hours on the steps of the Scindia Steamship Company building. Finally, late that afternoon, Mrs. Morarji emerged in a flurry of business talk with her secretary, Mr. Choksi. Upon seeing Bhaktivedanta Swami, she stopped. "Who is this gentleman sitting here?" she asked Mr. Choksi.

"He's been here for five hours," the secretary said.

"All right, I'll come," she said and walked up to where Bhaktivedanta Swami was sitting. He smiled and stood, offering *namaskāras* with his folded palms. "Swamiji, what can I do for you?" she said.

Bhaktivedanta Swami told her briefly of his intentions to print the third volume of his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. "I want you to help me," he said.

"All right," Mrs. Morarji replied. "We can meet tomorrow, because it is getting late. Tomorrow you can come, and we will discuss."

The next day, Bhaktivedanta Swami met with Mrs. Morarji in her office, where she looked at the typed manuscript and the published volumes. "All right," she said, "if you want to print it, I will give you the aid. Whatever you want. You can get it printed."

With Mrs. Morarji's guarantee, Bhaktivedanta Swami was free to

return to Vṛndāvana to finish writing the manuscript. As with the previous volumes, he set a demanding schedule for writing and publishing. The third volume would complete the First Canto. Then, with a supply of impressive literature, he would be ready to go to the West. Even with volumes One and Two he was getting a better reception in India. Already he had seen the vice president and prime minister. He had successfully approached a big business magnate of Bombay, and within a few minutes of presenting the book, he had received a large donation. The books were powerful preaching.

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Janmāṣṭamī was drawing near, and Bhaktivedanta Swami was planning a celebration at the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. He wanted to invite Biswanath Das, the governor of Uttar Pradesh, to preside over the ceremony honoring Lord Kṛṣṇa's appearance. Sri Biswanath had received a copy of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* Volume One and had written a favorable review. Although a politician, he was known for his affection and respect for *sādhus*. He regularly invited recognized *sādhus* to his home, and once a year he would visit all the important temples of Mathurā and Vṛndāvana. Bhaktivedanta Swami asked Vṛndāvana's municipal president, Mangalal Sharma, to invite the governor to the Janmāṣṭamī celebration at Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. The governor readily accepted the invitation.

Bhaktivedanta Swami printed a flyer announcing:

On the Occasion of JANMASTAMI ceremony at
The Samadhi ground of Srila Rupa and Jeeva Goswami
SRI SRI RADHA DAMODAR TEMPLE

Sebakunj, Vrindaban.

Goudiya Kirtan Performances

In the Presence of

His Excellency Sri Biswanath Das
GOVERNOR OF UTTAR PRADESH

&

The chief Guest SRI G. D. SOMANI of Bombay

Trustee of Sri Ranganathji Temple, Vrindaban.

Dated at Vrindaban Sunday the 31st August, 1964 at 7-30 to 8-30 p.m.

The flyer contained an advertisement for the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* series, to be completed in sixty volumes. *Bhajan*as to be sung on the occasion—"Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Prabhu," "Nītāi-pada-kamala," the "Prayers to the Six Gosvāmīs," and other favorite songs of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas—were printed in Bengali as a songbook.

The program was successful. A large crowd attended and sang songs to Lord Kṛṣṇa and took *prasādam*. Bhaktivedanta Swami lectured on a verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describing the Age of Kali as an ocean of faults that had but one saving quality: the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. After leading Hare Kṛṣṇa *kīrtana*, Bhaktivedanta Swami presented a copy of his second volume of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to the governor and spoke of his plans to preach all over the world.

The day after Janmāṣṭamī was Bhaktivedanta Swami's sixty-ninth birthday. A few days later, Biswanath Das requested Swami Mahārāja to visit him at his mansion in Lucknow. It was a special occasion, and the governor had invited several *sādhus* and planned a *kīrtana* program. He had invited a professional musical group who toured India performing *kīrtanas* and giving recitals. One of the musicians, young Sisir Kumar Bhattacharya, was very impressed with Bhaktivedanta Swami.

Sisir Bhattacharya: *We were invited to perform kīrtana in the governor's house in Lucknow. We had about seven or eight in our group. This was the governor's house, a big home, and I was sitting on a dais. I saw the governor, Biswanath Das, and beside him was a sādhu who was old but I thought was really strong. When I saw the governor sitting there, I came down from the dais and bowed down. Then I asked which subject he wanted to listen to. He said, "Let's have something about Caitanya Mahāprabhu." Then I said, "I'm very glad you selected this." About one half hour we spent on Mahāprabhu's kīrtana, and then we had our dinner in the big banquet hall on all silver plates with the governor's symbols on each of them.*

We sat together, and I was sitting side by side with the same sādhu, and he introduced himself as Bhaktivedanta Swami. We discussed, and then the Swami presented me with a book, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Bhaktivedanta Swami said, "I am interested to propagate kṛṣṇa-nāma and Caitanya Mahāprabhu in the Western countries. I am trying to get some way to find some ticket. If I get, I will go, and I will propagate Mahāprabhu's teachings." And he uttered this verse from Mahāprabhu:

pr̥thivīte āche yata nagarādi grām/ sarvatra pracār haibe mor nāma.* *But I did not think he would actually be able to do it, because he was very simple and poor.*

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With the manuscript for Volume Three complete and with the money to print it, Bhaktivedanta Swami once again entered the printing world, purchasing paper, correcting proofs, and keeping the printer on schedule so that the book would be finished by January 1965. Thus, by his persistence, he who had almost no money of his own managed to publish his third large hardbound volume within a little more than two years.

At this rate, with his respect in the scholarly world increasing, he might soon become a recognized figure amongst his countrymen. But he had his vision set on the West. And with the third volume now printed, he felt he was at last prepared. He was sixty-nine and would have to go soon. It had been more than forty years since Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had first asked a young householder in Calcutta to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the West. At first it had seemed impossible to Abhay Charan, who had so recently entered family responsibilities. That obstacle, however, had long ago been removed, and for more than ten years he had been free to travel. But he had been penniless (and still was). And he had wanted first to publish some volumes of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam to take with him; it had seemed necessary if he were to do something solid. Now, by Kṛṣṇa's grace, three volumes were on hand.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *I planned that I must go to America. Generally they go to London, but I did not want to go to London. I was simply thinking how to go to New York. I was scheming, "Whether I shall go this way, through Tokyo, Japan, or that way? Which way is cheaper?" That was my proposal. And I was targeting to New York always. Sometimes I was dreaming that I have come to New York.*

Then Bhaktivedanta Swami met Mr. Agarwal, a Mathurā businessman, and mentioned to him in passing, as he did to almost everyone he met, that he wanted to go to the West. Although Mr. Agarwal had known

*Caitanya Mahāprabhu had predicted, "One day My name will be known in every town and village in the world."

Bhaktivedanta Swami for only a few minutes, he volunteered to try to get him a sponsor in America. It was something Mr. Agarwal had done a number of times; when he met a *sādhū* who mentioned something about going abroad to teach Hindu culture, he would ask his son Gopal, an engineer in Pennsylvania, to send back a sponsorship form. When Mr. Agarwal volunteered to help in this way, Bhaktivedanta Swami urged him please to do so.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *I did not say anything seriously to Mr. Agarwal, but perhaps he took it very seriously. I asked him, "Well, why don't you ask your son Gopal to sponsor so that I can go there? I want to preach there."*

But Bhaktivedanta Swami knew he could not simply dream of going to the West; he needed money. In March 1965 he made another visit to Bombay, attempting to sell his books. Again he stayed at the free *dharmaśālā*, Premkutir. But finding customers was difficult. He met Paramananda Bhagwani, a librarian at Jai Hind College, who purchased books for the college library and then escorted Bhaktivedanta Swami to a few likely outlets.

Mr. Bhagwani: *I took him to the Popular Book Depot at Grant Road to help him in selling books, but they told us they couldn't stock the books because they don't have much sales on religion. Then we went to another shop nearby, and the owner also regretted his inability to sell the books. Then he went to Sadhuvela, near Mahalakshmi temple, and we met the head of the temple there. He, of course, welcomed us. They have a library of their own, and they stock religious books, so we approached them to please keep a set there in their library. They are a wealthy āśrama, and yet he also expressed his inability.*

Bhaktivedanta Swami returned to Delhi, pursuing the usual avenues of bookselling and looking for whatever opportunity might arise. And to his surprise, he was contacted by the Ministry of External Affairs and informed that his No Objection certificate for going to the U.S. was ready. Since he had not instigated any proceedings for leaving the country, Bhaktivedanta Swami had to inquire from the ministry about what had happened. They showed him the Statutory Declaration Form signed by Mr. Gopal Agarwal of Butler, Pennsylvania; Mr. Agarwal solemnly declared that he would bear the expenses of Bhaktivedanta Swami during his stay in the U.S.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *Whatever the correspondence was there between the father and son, I did not know. I simply asked him, "Why don't you ask your son Gopal to sponsor?" And now, after three or four months, the No Objection certificate was sent from the Indian Consulate in New York to me. He had already sponsored my arrival there for one month, and all of a sudden I got the paper.*

At his father's request, Gopal Agarwal had done as he had done for several other *sādhus*, none of whom had ever gone to America. It was just a formality, something to satisfy his father. Gopal had requested a form from the Indian Consulate in New York, obtained a statement from his employer certifying his monthly salary, gotten a letter from his bank showing his balance as of April 1965, and had the form notarized. It had been stamped and approved in New York and sent to Delhi. Now Bhaktivedanta Swami had a sponsor. But he still needed a passport, visa, P-form, and travel fare.

The passport was not very difficult to obtain. Krishna Pandit helped, and by June 10 he had his passport. Carefully, he penned in his address at the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple in Chippiwada and wrote his father's name, Gour Mohan De. He asked Krishna Pandit also to pay for his going abroad, but Krishna Pandit refused, thinking it against Hindu principles for a *sādhū* to go abroad—and also very expensive.

With his passport and sponsorship papers, Bhaktivedanta Swami went to Bombay, not to sell books or raise funds for printing; he wanted a ticket for America. Again he tried approaching Sumati Morarji. He showed his sponsorship papers to her secretary, Mr. Choksi, who was impressed and who went to Mrs. Morarji on his behalf. "The Swami from Vṛndāvana is back," he told her. "He has published his book on your donation. He has a sponsor, and he wants to go to America. He wants you to send him on a Scindia ship." Mrs. Morarji said no, the Swamiji was too old to go to the United States and expect to accomplish anything. As Mr. Choksi conveyed to him Mrs. Morarji's words, Bhaktivedanta Swami listened disapprovingly. She wanted him to stay in India and complete the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Why go to the States? Finish the job here.

But Bhaktivedanta Swami was fixed on going. He told Mr. Choksi that he should convince Mrs. Morarji. He coached Mr. Choksi on what he should say: "I find this gentleman very inspired to go to the States

and preach something to the people there....” But when he told Mrs. Morarji, she again said no. The Swami was not healthy. It would be too cold there. He might not be able to come back, and she doubted whether he would be able to accomplish much there. People in America were not so cooperative, and they would probably not listen to him.

Exasperated with Mr. Choksi’s ineffectiveness, Bhaktivedanta Swami demanded a personal interview. It was granted, and a gray-haired, determined Bhaktivedanta Swami presented his emphatic request: “Please give me one ticket.”

Sumati Morarji was concerned. “Swamiji, you are so old—you are taking this responsibility. Do you think it is all right?”

“No,” he reassured her, lifting his hand as if to reassure a doubting daughter, “it is all right.”

“But do you know what my secretaries think? They say, ‘Swamiji is going to die there.’”

Bhaktivedanta made a face as if to dismiss a foolish rumor. Again he insisted that she give him a ticket. “All right,” she said. “Get your P-form, and I will make an arrangement to send you by our ship.” Bhaktivedanta Swami smiled brilliantly and happily left her offices, past her amazed and skeptical clerks.

A “P-form”—another necessity for an Indian national who wants to leave the country—is a certificate given by the State Bank of India, certifying that the person has no excessive debts in India and is cleared by the banks. That would take a while to obtain. And he also did not yet have a U.S. visa. He needed to pursue these government permissions in Bombay, but he had no place to stay. So Mrs. Morarji agreed to let him reside at the Scindia Colony, a compound of apartments for employees of the Scindia Company.

He stayed in a small, unfurnished apartment with only his trunk and typewriter. The resident Scindia employees all knew that Mrs. Morarji was sending him to the West, and some of them became interested in his cause. They were impressed, for although he was so old, he was going abroad to preach. He was a special *sādhū*, a scholar. They heard from him how he was taking hundreds of copies of his books with him, but no money. He became a celebrity at the Scindia Colony. Various families brought him rice, *sabji*, and fruit. They brought so much that he could not eat it all, and he mentioned this to Mr. Choksi. Just accept it and dis-

tribute it, Mr. Choksi advised. Bhaktivedanta Swami then began giving remnants of his food to the children. Some of the older residents gathered to hear him as he read and spoke from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Mr. Vasavada, the chief cashier of Scindia, was particularly impressed and came regularly to learn from the *sādhū*. Mr. Vasavada obtained copies of Bhaktivedanta Swami's books and read them in his home.

Bhaktivedanta Swami's apartment shared a roofed-in veranda with Mr. Nagarajan, a Scindia office worker, and his wife.

Mrs. Nagarajan: *Every time when I passed that way, he used to be writing or chanting. I would ask him, "Swamiji, what are you writing?" He used to sit near the window and one after another was translating the Sanskrit. He gave me two books and said, "Child, if you read this book, you will understand." We would have discourses in the house, and four or five Gujarati ladies used to come. At one of these discourses he told one lady that those who wear their hair parted on the side—that is not a good idea. Every Indian lady should have her hair parted in the center. They were very fond of listening and very keen to hear his discourse.*

Every day he would go out trying to get his visa and P-form as quickly as possible, selling his books, and seeking contacts and supporters for his future *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* publishing. Mr. Nagarajan tried to help. Using the telephone directory, he made a list of wealthy business and professional men who were Vaiṣṇavas and might be inclined to assist. Bhaktivedanta Swami's neighbors at Scindia Colony observed him coming home dead tired in the evening. He would sit quietly, perhaps feeling morose, some neighbors thought, but after a while he would sit up, rejuvenated, and start writing.

Mrs. Nagarajan: *When he came home we used to give him courage, and we used to tell him, "Swamiji, one day you will achieve your target." He would say, "Time is still not right. Time is still not right. They are all ajñānīs. They don't understand. But still I must carry on."*

Sometimes I would go by, and his cādar would be on the chair, but he would be sitting on the windowsill. I would ask him, "Swamiji, did you have any good contacts?" He would say, "Not much today. I didn't get much, and it is depressing. Tomorrow Kṛṣṇa will give me more details." And he would sit there quietly.

After ten minutes, he would sit in his chair and start writing. I would wonder how Swamiji was so tired in one minute and in another

minute . . . Even if he was tired, he was not defeated. He would never speak discouragement. And we would always encourage him and say, "If today you don't get it, tomorrow you will definitely meet some people, and they will encourage you." And my friends used to come in the morning and in the evening for discourse, and they would give namaskāra and fruits.

Mr. Nagarajan: *His temperament was very adjustable and homely. Our friends would offer a few rupees. He would say, "All right. It will help." He used to walk from our colony to Andheri station. It is two kilometers, and he used to go there without taking a bus, because he had no money.*

Bhaktivedanta Swami had a page printed entitled "My Mission," and he would show it to influential men in his attempts to get further financing for *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The printed statement proposed that God consciousness was the only remedy for the evils of modern materialistic society. Despite scientific advancement and material comforts, there was no peace in the world; therefore, *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the glory of India, must be spread all over the world.

Mrs. Morarji asked Bhaktivedanta Swami if he would read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to her in the evening. He agreed. She began sending her car for him at six o'clock each evening, and they would sit in her garden, where he would recite and comment on the *Bhāgavatam*.

Mrs. Morarji: *He used to come in the evening and sing the verses in rhythmic tunes, as is usually done with the Bhāgavatam. And certain points—when you sit and discuss, you raise so many points—he was commenting on certain points, but it was all from the Bhāgavatam. So he used to sit and explain to me and then go. He could give time, and I could hear him. That was for about ten or fifteen days.*

His backing by Scindia and his sponsorship in the U.S. were a strong presentation, and with the help of the people at Scindia he obtained his visa on July 28, 1965. But the P-form proceedings went slowly and even threatened to be a last, insurmountable obstacle.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *Formerly there was no restriction for going outside. But for a sannyāsī like me, I had so much difficulty obtaining the government permission to go out. I had applied for the P-form sanction, but no sanction was coming. Then I went to the State Bank of India. The officer was Mr. Martarchari. He told me, "Swamiji, you are sponsored by a pri-*

vate man. So we cannot accept. If you were invited by some institution, then we could consider. But you are invited by a private man for one month. And after one month, if you are in difficulty, there will be so many obstacles." But I had already prepared everything to go. So I said, "What have you done?" He said, "I have decided not to sanction your P-form." I said, "No, no, don't do this. You better send me to your superior. It should not be like that."

So he took my request, and he sent the file to the chief official of foreign exchange—something like that. So he was the supreme man in the State Bank of India. I went to see him. I asked his secretary, "Do you have such-and-such a file. You kindly put it to Mr. Rao. I want to see him." So the secretary agreed, and he put the file, and he put my name down to see him. I was waiting. So Mr. Rao came personally. He said, "Swamiji, I passed your case. Don't worry."

Following Mrs. Morarji's instruction, her secretary, Mr. Choksi, made final arrangements for Bhaktivedanta Swami. Since he had no warm clothes, Mr. Choksi took him to buy a wool jacket and other woolen clothes. Mr. Choksi spent about 250 rupees on new clothes, including some new *dhotis*. At Bhaktivedanta Swami's request, Mr. Choksi printed five hundred copies of a small pamphlet containing the eight verses written by Lord Caitanya and an advertisement for *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, in the context of an advertisement for the Scindia Steamship Company.

Mr. Choksi: I asked him, "Why couldn't you go earlier? Why do you want to go now to the States, at this age?" He replied that, "I will be able to do something good, I am sure." His idea was that someone should be there who would be able to go near people who were lost in life and teach them and tell them what the correct thing is. I asked him so many times, "Why do you want to go to the States? Why don't you start something in Bombay or Delhi or Vṛndāvana?" I was teasing him also: "You are interested in seeing the States. Therefore, you want to go. All Swamijis want to go to the States, and you want to enjoy there." He said, "What I have got to see? I have finished my life."

But sometimes he was hot-tempered. He used to get angry at me for the delays. "What is this nonsense?" he would say. Then I would understand: he is getting angry now. Sometimes he would say, "Oh, Mrs. Morarji has still not signed this paper? She says come back tomorrow, we will talk tomorrow! What is this? Why this daily going back?" He would

get angry. Then I would say, "You can sit here." But he would say, "How long do I have to sit?" He would become impatient.

Finally Mrs. Morarji scheduled a place for him on one of her ships, the *Jaladuta*, which was sailing from Calcutta on August 13. She had made certain that he would travel on a ship whose captain understood the needs of a vegetarian and a *brāhmaṇa*. Mrs. Morarji told the *Jaladuta*'s captain, Arun Pandia, to carry extra vegetables and fruits for the Swami. Mr. Choksi spent the last two days with Bhaktivedanta Swami in Bombay, picking up the pamphlets at the press, purchasing clothes, and driving him to the station to catch the train for Calcutta.

He arrived in Calcutta only a few days before the *Jaladuta*'s departure. Although he had lived much of his life in the city, he now had nowhere to stay. It was as he had written in his "Vṛndāvana-bhajana": "I have my wife, sons, daughters, grandsons, everything, / But I have no money, so they are a fruitless glory." Although in this city he had been so carefully nurtured as a child, those early days were also gone forever: "Where have my loving father and mother gone to now? / And where are all my elders, who were my own folk? / Who will give me news of them, tell me who? / All that is left of this family life is a list of names."

Out of the hundreds of people in Calcutta whom Bhaktivedanta Swami knew, he chose to call on Mr. Sisir Bhattacharya, the flamboyant *kīrtana* singer he had met a year before at the governor's house in Lucknow. Mr. Bhattacharya was not a relative, not a disciple, nor even a close friend; but he was willing to help. Bhaktivedanta Swami called at his place and informed him that he would be leaving on a cargo ship in a few days; he needed a place to stay, and he would like to give some lectures. Mr. Bhattacharya immediately began to arrange a few private meetings at friends' homes, where he would sing and Bhaktivedanta Swami would then speak.

Mr. Bhattacharya thought the *sādhū*'s leaving for America should make an important news story. He accompanied Bhaktivedanta Swami to all the newspapers in Calcutta—the *Hindustan Standard*, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, the *Jugantas*, the *Statesman*, and others. Bhaktivedanta Swami had only one photograph, a passport photo, and they made a few copies for the newspapers. Mr. Bhattacharya would try to explain what the

Swami was going to do, and the news writers would listen. But none of them wrote anything. Finally they visited the *Dainik Basumati*, a local Bengali daily, which agreed to print a small article with Bhaktivedanta Swami's picture.

Mr. Bhattacharya continued to assist Bhaktivedanta Swami with his final business and speaking engagements.

Mr. Bhattacharya: *We just took a hired taxi to this place and that place. And he would go for preaching. I never talked to him during the preaching, but once when I was coming back from the preaching, I said, "You said this thing about this. But I tell you it is not this. It is this." I crossed him in something or argued. And he was furious. Whenever we argued and I said, "No, I think this is this," then he was shouting. He was very furious. He said, "You are always saying, 'I think, I think, I think.' What is the importance of what you think? Everything is what you think. But it doesn't matter. It matters what śāstra says. You must follow." I said, "I must do what I think, what I feel—that is important." He said, "No, you should forget this. You should forget your desire. You should change your habit. Better you depend on śāstras. You follow what śāstra wants you to do, and do it. I am not telling you what I think, but I am repeating what the śāstra says."*

The day before his departure, Bhaktivedanta Swami traveled to nearby Māyāpur to visit the *samādhi* of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. Then he returned to Calcutta. He was ready.

He had only a suitcase, an umbrella, and a supply of dry cereal. He did not know what he would find to eat in America; perhaps there would be only meat. If so, he was prepared to live on boiled potatoes and the cereal. His main baggage, several trunks of his books, was being handled separately by Scindia Cargo. Two hundred three-volume sets—the very thought of the books gave him confidence.

When the day came for him to leave, he needed that confidence. He was making a momentous break with this previous life, and he was dangerously old and not in strong health. And he was going to an unknown and probably unwelcoming country. To be poor and unknown in India was one thing. Even in these Kali-yuga days, when India's leaders were rejecting Vedic culture and imitating the West, it was still India; it was still the remains of Vedic civilization. He had been able to see millionaires, governors, the prime minister, simply by showing up at

their doors and waiting. A *sannyāsī* was respected; the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was respected. But in America it would be different. He would be no one, a foreigner. And there was no tradition of *sādhus*, no temples, no free *āśramas*. But when he thought of the books he was bringing—transcendental knowledge in English—he became confident. When he met someone in America he would give him a flyer: “‘Srimad Bhagwatam,’ India’s Message of Peace and Goodwill.”

It was August 13, just a few days before Janmāṣṭamī, the appearance day anniversary of Lord Kṛṣṇa—the next day would be his own seventieth birthday. During these last years, he had been in Vṛndāvana for Janmāṣṭamī. Many Vṛndāvana residents would never leave there; they were old and at peace in Vṛndāvana. Bhaktivedanta Swami was also concerned that he might die away from Vṛndāvana. That was why all the Vaiṣṇava *sādhus* and widows had taken vows not to leave, even for Mathurā—because to die in Vṛndāvana was the perfection of life. And the Hindu tradition was that a *sannyāsī* should not cross the ocean and go to the land of the *mlecchas*. But beyond all that was the desire of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and his desire was nondifferent from that of Lord Kṛṣṇa. And Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu had predicted that the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa would be known in every town and village of the world.

Mr. Bhattacharya and Bhaktivedanta Swami took a taxi down to the Calcutta port. Bhaktivedanta Swami was carrying a Bengali copy of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, which he intended to read during the crossing. Somehow he would be able to cook on board. Or if not, he could starve—whatever Kṛṣṇa desired. He checked his essentials: passenger ticket, passport, visa, P-form, sponsor’s address. Finally it was happening.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *With what great difficulty I got out of the country! Some way or other, by Kṛṣṇa’s grace, I got out so I could spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement all over the world. Otherwise, to remain in India—it was not possible. I wanted to start a movement in India, but I was not at all encouraged.*

The black cargo ship, small and weathered, was moored at dockside, a gangway leading from the dock to the ship’s deck. Indian merchant sailors curiously eyed the elderly saffron-dressed *sādhū* as he spoke last words to his companion in the taxi and then left him and walked determinedly towards the boat.

For thousands of years, *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* had been known only in India, not outside, except in twisted, faithless reports by foreigners. And the only swamis to have reached America had been nondevotees, Māyāvādi impersonalists. But now Kṛṣṇa was sending Bhaktivedanta Swami as His emissary.

Mr. Bhattacharya: *He was alone. A lone fighter. When he left, there was no one on the shore to bid him good-bye. No friends, no supporter, no disciple, nobody. Even if you call me, I was not a disciple of his. I was a disciple of somebody else. So I was not his follower. But due to shared love, I had very much respect for him. So, I was the only person standing on the shore to say him good-bye. No one was with me. I could not know that it was such an important thing.*

Appendixes



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FARMS: Carriere, Mississippi (New Tālvana)—Rt. No. 2, Box 449, 39426 / (601)798-6705; Gainesville, Florida—contact ISKCON Gainesville; Gurabo, Puerto Rico (New Gandhamadana)—Box 215 B, Route 181, Sanluis 00658; Hopland, California (New Vraja-mandala Dhama)—Route 175, Box 469, 95449 / (707)744-1100; Hotchkiss, Colorado (New Barshana)—P.O. Box 112, 81419 / (303)527-4584; Lynchburg, Tennessee (Murari-savaka)—Rt. No. 1, Box 146-A, (Mulberry) 37359 / (615)759-7058; Moundsville, West Virginia (New Vrindaban)—R.D. No. 1, Box 319, Hare Krishna Ridge 26041 / (304)845-2790; Port Royal, Pennsylvania (Gita-nāgarī)—R.D. No. 1, 17082 / (717)527-2493.

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Significant Events in the Life of Śrīla Prabhupāda

1 Sept. 1896	Abhay Charan De was born in the Calcutta suburb of Tollygunge.
circa 1901	Began his own Ratha-yātrā.
circa 1902	Began his own Deity worship.
1904	Entered Mutty Lall Seal Free School.
circa 1912	Mother, Rajani, died.
1916	Entered Scottish Churches' College.
1918	Married Radharani Datta.
1920	Rejected college diploma and began dressing as a Gandhian.
1921	Began working as a department manager in Dr. Kartick Chandra Bose's pharmaceutical company.
1922	Met Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī for the first time.
1923	Moved with his family to Allahabad and started the Prayag Pharmacy.
1925	Visited Vṛndāvana for the first time.
1928	Encountered disciples of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī at Allahabad and helped them start an Allahabad branch of the Gaudiya Math.
1930	Father, Gour Mohan, died.
28 Oct. 1932	Traveled to Kosi where he heard Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī speak for the second time.
Nov. 1932	Received initiation from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī at Allahabad.
1933-34	Went to Bombay to start a pharmaceutical business. There he met some of his Godbrothers and helped them establish a Bombay branch of the Gaudiya Math.

- 25 Feb. 1935 Presented his Vyāsa-pūjā homage before the members and guests of the Bombay Gaudiya Math on the appearance day of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.
- Nov. 1935 Met Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī at Rādhākunda.
- 13 Dec. 1936 Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī wrote to Abhay asking him to preach the message of Lord Caitanya in English.
- 1 Jan. 1937 Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī passed away at Purī.
- 1938 Abhay moved his family and business back to Calcutta to 6 Sita Kanta Banerjee Lane.
- 1939 His Godbrothers honored him with the title Bhaktivedānta.
- Feb. 1944 Began *Back to Godhead* magazine in Calcutta.
- 1945 Opened a pharmaceutical factory in Lucknow, Abhay Charan De & Sons.
- 7 Dec. 1947 Wrote to Mahatma Gandhi.
- 1948 *Geetopanishad* manuscript stolen. Lost Lucknow factory.
- 1949 Began writing for *Gauḍīya Patrikā* magazine.
- Feb. 1952 Revived *Back to Godhead* from Allahabad.
- Oct. 1952 Began his Jhansi preaching.
- 1953 Initiated his first disciple, Ācārya Prabhākar, in Jhansi.
- 16 May 1953 Grand opening day of the League of Devotees in Jhansi.
- 1953 His Allahabad business burglarized.
- 1954 Left family.

1955	Left Jhansi for Mathurā.
July 1955	Began editing <i>Sajjana-toṣaṇī</i> from Gaudiya Saṅgha in Delhi.
Oct. 1955	Relieved of duties with <i>Sajjana-toṣaṇī</i> . Alone in Delhi trying to preach.
Feb. 1956	Began <i>Back to Godhead</i> again, from Delhi.
Sept. 1956	Moved to the Vṛndāvana-gopālajī temple in Vṛndāvana.
Jan. 1957	Visited Bombay to preach, on Ācārya Prabhākara's invitation.
Spring, 1957	Solicited members for the League of Devotees in Kanpur.
1958	Returned to Bombay for preaching.
Fall, 1958	Wrote "Vṛndāvana-bhajana" at Vṛndāvana-gopālajī temple.
20 Oct. 1958	Revived <i>Back to Godhead</i> from Delhi, after two years.
Dec. 1958	Wrote "Viraha-aṣṭaka" for Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's disappearance day.
17 Sept. 1959	Accepted <i>sannyāsa</i> from Keśava Mahārāja in Mathurā.
early 1960	Acquired quarters in Chippiwada temple, Delhi.
Fall, 1960	Published <i>Easy Journey to Other Planets</i> (his first book) in Delhi.
Feb. 1961	(on Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's appearance day) Submitted an offering sharply criticizing his Godbrothers for not following their spiritual master's orders.
July 1962	Moved from Vṛndāvana-gopālajī temple to Rādhā-Dāmodara temple in Vṛndāvana for writing <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> .

late 1962	Published <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> , Canto One, Volume One, in Delhi.
early 1964	Published <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> , Canto One, Volume Two.
June 1964	Met Prime Minister Shastri and gave him a copy of <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> , Canto One, Volume One.
31 Aug. 1964	(on Janmāṣṭamī day) Held festival at Rādhā-Dāmodara temple for promoting his <i>Bhāgavatam</i> volumes and his mission of preaching abroad.
Jan. 1965	Published <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i> , Canto One, Volume Three.
May 1965	Received No Objection certificate from Indian government.
10 June 1965	Received his passport.
Summer, 1965	Sumati Morarji agreed to send Bhaktivedanta Swami to America.
28 July 1965	Obtained visa.
13 Aug. 1965	Set sail from Calcutta for the United States.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's Writings in India, 1936–1965

BACK TO GODHEAD

Parts I, II, III, & IV (1944) "First Appearance on the Vyasa Puja Day 1944" (a special 44-page booklet)

"Message of His Divine Grace" (translated from Bengali)

"Message of Thakur Bhakti Vinode" (translated from Bengali)

"Back to Godhead" (editorial)

"Godhead and His Potentialities"

"Theosophy Ends in Vaishnavism"

"The Science of Congregational Chanting of the Name of the Lord"

Volume I, Part II (October 1944)

"Thanks to the Government of India"

"Gandhi-Jinnah Talks"

"Mr. Churchill's 'Humane World' "

"Mr. Bernard Shaw's Wishful Desire"

"Spontaneous Love of Godhead"

Volume I, Part IX (16 February 1952) "First Appearance on the Vyasa Puja Day 1944 . . . Reappearance on the 16th Feb. 1952"

"Paramahansa Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Goswami Maharaja"

"Karma Yoga of Bhagwat Gita"

"Theosophy Concluded" (continued)

Volume III, Part I (1 March 1956)

"The S.R.C. Catastrophe"

"Decoration of the Dead Body"

Volume III, Part II (16 March 1956)

"Who Is a 'Sadhu'?"

BACK TO GODHEAD (*continued*)

Volume III, Part III (5 April 1956)

“The Lowest of the Mankind”

“Lord Shri Chaitanya: His welfare activities”

Volume III, Part IV (20 April 1956)

“Philosophical Problems Within Social Awareness”

“Godless Creation: An atheistic and dangerous theory”

“Human Welfare Activities”

Volume III, Part V (5 May 1956)

“Sufferings of Humanity: Is Providence responsible for it?”

“Conception of Universal Brotherhood”

“Lord Buddha: The emblem of Theism”

Volume III, Part VI (20 May 1956)

“‘Yajna’ or Sacrifice for the Supreme: Conception of Classless Society”

“How to Broadcast the Teachings of Bhagwat Geeta”

“Grow More Food”

Volume III, Part VII (5 June 1956)

“Religion Pretentious and Religion Real”

“The Eight Stanzas of His Lordship Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu”

“Purity of Conduct Basic Principle of Human Civilization”

“How to Broadcast the Teachings of Bhagawat Geeta” (Part 2)

Volume III, Part XIX (5 May 1960)

“Chaitanya Charitamrita, Essays and Text” (continued from Part XVI)

“Bhakti Rasamrita Sindhu”

Volume III, Part XX (20 May 1960)

“Bhakti Rasamrita Sindhu” (continued)

“Chaitanya Charitamrita” (continued)

BACK TO GODHEAD (*continued*)

Volume III, Part XXI (5 June 1960)

“Bhakti Rasamrita Sindhu” (*continued*)

“Chaitanya Charitamrita, Essays and Text” (*continued*)

Volume III, Part XXII (5 July 1960)

“Bhakti Rasamrita Sindhu” (*continued*)

“Chaitanya Charitamrita, Essays and Text” (*continued*)

Volume III, Part XXIII (20 July 1960)

“Sanatan Dharma is the Religion of All Living Entities”

“Sri Ishopanishad”

Volume III, Part XXIV (5 August 1960)

“Sri Ishopanishad” (*continued*)

Volume IV, Part I (5 September 1960)

“Sri Ishopanishad” (*continued*)

EASY JOURNEY TO OTHER PLANETS

Delhi, League of Devotees (1960)

GAUḌĪYA PATRIKĀ (in Bengali)

Volume I, Number 2 (April 1949)

“Letter of Appreciation to Keśava Mahārāja for having received first edition of Gauḍīya magazine”

Volume I, Number 5 (July 1949)

“Reply to Śrīyukta Jitendra Narayana Vasu's Questions”

Volume I, Number 6 through Volume II, Number 8

(August 1949–October 1950)

“Topics of the Supreme Lord”

GAUḌĪYA PATRIKĀ (*continued*)

Volume III, Number 1 through Volume IV, Number 8
(March 1951–October 1952)

“Topics of Bhakti-yoga”

Volume IV, Number 9 and Number 10
(November & December 1952)

“Topics of Jñāna-yoga” (continued in Volume VI, Number 10)

Volume V, Number 1 (February 1953)

“Play of Renunciation”

Volume V, Number 2 (April 1953)

“Review of Various Books”

“Criticism of Līlā-kīrtana”

Volume V, Number 4 (June 1953)

Article announcing the start of the League of Devotees—
16 May 1953

Volume V, Number 7 (September 1953)

“The Magnanimity of Lord Caitanya”

Volume VI, Number 10 through Number 12
(December 1954–February 1955)

“Topics of *Jñāna-yoga*” (continued from Volume IV, Number 10)

Volume VII, Number 6 and Number 7 (August & September 1955)

“Life of the Bhāgavata”

Volume VII, Number 8 (October 1955)

“Material Life”

Volume VII, Number 11 (January 1956)

“The Devotion of Gopannara (A Great Devotee of Lord
Rāmacandra)”

GAUḌĪYA PATRIKĀ (*continued*)

Volume IX, Number 1 and Number 2 (March & April 1957)

“Śrī Kṛṣṇa, The Knower of the Vedas”

Volume IX, Number 3 (May 1957)

“The Error of the Gita Press”

Volume IX, Number 6 through Number 8 (August–October 1957)

“The Identity and Extent of Sin”

Volume IX, Number 12 (February 1958) plus Volume X, numbers
3, 4, 5, 8, & 12 (May 1958–February 1959)

“The Error of the Sages (Critical review of Dr. Radhakrishnan's
Gītā commentary)”

Volume X, Number 9 and Number 10

(November & December 1958)

“Poem on Vṛndāvana Worship (Bhajana)”

Volume X, Number 11 (February 1959)

“Eight Stanzas on Separation from Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī”

Volume XI, Number 1 and Number 2 (March & April 1959)

“The Fallen Brāhmaṇa or ‘Poor Nārāyaṇa’; In Opposition to an
Article by Dr. Sri Naliniranjana Sena”

Volume XI, Number 3 (May 1959)

“The Atomic Living Entity and the Supreme Lord”

Volume XI, Number 4 and Number 5 (June & July 1959)

“The Spiritual Sky”

Volume XI, Number 8 (October 1959)

“The Prayer of Emperor Kulaśekhara”

Article on acceptance of *sannyāsa*

GAUḌĪYA PATRIKĀ (*continued*)

Volume XI, Number 9 (November 1959)

“The Prayer of Emperor Kulaśekhara” (*continued*)

“Two Sannyāsīs : Muni Mahārāja and Swami Mahārāja”

Volume XI, Number 10 and Number 11

(December 1959 & January 1960)

“The Prayer of Emperor Kulaśekhara” (*continued*)

Volume XI, Number 12 (February 1960)

“The Modern Scientists’ Discovery of the Supreme Lord’s Abode
(Dhāma)”

Volume XIV, numbers 4, 7, & 8 (June, September, & October 1962)

“Śrī Gītā-gāna”

SRIMAD BHAGWATAM, Volume 1

Delhi, The League of Devotees (1962)

SRIMAD BHAGWATAM, Volume 2

Delhi, The League of Devotees (1964)

SRIMAD BHAGWATAM, Volume 3

Delhi, The League of Devotees (1965)

MISCELLANY (*published*)

1936

“Sree Vyas Puja Homage” (*published in The Harmonist*)

1949

Essay, “The Preaching of Gaudiya Vaishnava Dharma Outside
Bengal”

MISCELLANY (published) (*continued*)

16 March 1953

Essay, "The Preaching of Gaudiya Vaishnava Dharma Outside Bengal" (different from the above)

7 July 1953

Letter, "Hindu Missionaries" (published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* at Allahabad)

1964

Essay, "Re-creation of Man" (printed in *Indian Philosophy and Culture*, Vol. IX)

Undated essays

"The Cure for the Material Disease"

"A Glorification of Devotional Service"

"God is Alive"

"The True Identity of the Living Being"

MISCELLANY (unpublished essays)

21 April 1939

"Introduction to Geetopanishad"

1950

"Man is the Architect of His Own Fortune . . ." (essay fragment followed by a list of twenty-four current world crises)

5 February 1950

"Love Affairs of Śrī Kṛṣṇa — the Supreme Lord"

"Science of Devotion (Bhakti Rasamrita Sindhu)" (thirty-three numbered sections comprising a summary study of the first chapter of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*)

"Secretary-Ministry of Education"

MISCELLANY (unpublished essays) (*continued*)

10 September 1959

“Solution of Present Crisis by *Bhagavad-gītā*: Twenty-Eight Points”

5 March 1952

“Contribution of Lord Caitanya to the People of the World”

8 June 1952

Untitled essay

1955

“Divine Relation”

“Light of the Bhagwat” (fifty illustrations with purports)

“Man Made Planet?”

“Message of Godhead”

6 December 1955

“Rai Bahudar”

“Temple Entry Movement”

1957

Essay on black marketeers (handwritten)

Untitled essay (handwritten)

“What is the Matter with the World?”

1958–1959 (approximately)

“An Analysis of *Bhagavad-gītā*”

“Conception of *Gītā-nāgarī* on the Principles of Gandhi”

“Interpretations of *Bhagavad-gītā*”

“Knowledge Transcendental”

“Liberation in Practice”

“Misuse of Public Funds in the Name of Religion”

“Obstacles in the Devotional Path” (fragment)

“Perfection at Home—A novel contribution to the fallen humanity”

MISCELLANY (unpublished essays) (*continued*)

“A Study of *Bhagavad-gītā* Means to Learn the *ABCD* of Spiritual Science”

Untitled fragment on the goal of human life as discussed by Lord Caitanya and Rāmānanda Rāya

Untitled fragment on morality and social organization

“World Pacifist and the *Bhagavad-gītā*”

1961

“Vaiśiṣṭyāṣṭakam” (eight prayers glorifying Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī)

21 January 1961

Bhagavad-gītā facts and figures (seventeen short paragraphs with verse references)

Undated

“Devotee and the Divinity”

“Divinity of Lord Caitanya” (fragment)

“Human Welfare Activities”

“Shaktipujah” (handwritten review)

Sanskrit Pronunciation Guide

Throughout the centuries, the Sanskrit language has been written in a variety of alphabets. The mode of writing most widely used throughout India, however, is called *devanāgarī*, which means, literally, the writing used in “the cities of the demigods.” The *devanāgarī* alphabet consists of forty-eight characters, including thirteen vowels and thirty-five consonants. Ancient Sanskrit grammarians arranged the alphabet according to practical linguistic principles, and this order has been accepted by all Western scholars. The system of transliteration used in this book conforms to a system that scholars in the last fifty years have accepted to indicate the pronunciation of each Sanskrit sound.

The short vowel **a** is pronounced like the **u** in *but*, long **ā** like the **a** in *far*, and short **i** like the **i** in *pin*. Long **ī** is pronounced as in *pique*, short **u** as in *pull*, and long **ū** as in *rule*. The vowel **ṛ** is pronounced like the **ri** in *rim*. The vowel **e** is pronounced as in *they*, **ai** as in *aisle*, **o** as in *go*, and **au** as in *how*. The *anusvāra* (**ṁ**), which is a pure nasal, is pronounced like the **n** in the French word *bon*, and *visarga* (**ḥ**), which is a strong aspirate, is pronounced as a final **h** sound. Thus **aḥ** is pronounced like *aha*, and **iḥ** like *ihi*.

The guttural consonants—**k**, **kh**, **g**, **gh**, and **ṅ**—are pronounced from the throat in much the same manner as in English. **K** is pronounced as in *kite*, **kh** as in *Eckhart*, **g** as in *give*, **gh** as in *dig hard*, and **ṅ** as in *sing*. The palatal consonants—**c**, **ch**, **j**, **jh**, and **ñ**—are pronounced from the palate with the middle of the tongue. **C** is pronounced as in *chair*, **ch** as in *staunch-heart*, **j** as in *joy*, **jh** as in *hedghehog*, and **ñ** as in *canyon*. The cerebral consonants—**ṭ**, **ṭh**, **ḍ**, **ḍh**, and **ṇ**—are pronounced with the tip of the tongue turned up and drawn back against the dome of the palate. **Ṭ** is pronounced as in *tub*, **ṭh** as in *light-heart*, **ḍ** as in *dove*, **ḍh** as in *red-hot*, and **ṇ** as in *nut*. The dental consonants—**t**, **th**, **d**, **dh**, and **n**—are pronounced in the same manner as the cerebrals, but with the forepart of the tongue against the teeth. The labial consonants—**p**, **ph**, **b**, **bh**, and **m**—are pronounced with the lips. **P** is pronounced as in *pine*, **ph** as in *uphill*, **b** as in *bird*, **bh** as in *rub-hard*, and **m** as in *mother*. The semivowels—**y**, **r**, **l**, and **v**—are pronounced as in *yes*, *run*, *light*, and *vine* respectively. The sibilants **ś**, **ṣ**, and **s**—are pronounced, respectively, as in the German word *sprechen* and the English words *shine* and *sun*. The letter **h** is pronounced as in *home*.

Glossary

A

Ācārya—one who teaches by example.

Ādi Gaṅgā—the original course of the Ganges, passing through Calcutta.

Advaita Prabhu—the older associate of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu who prayed that the Lord appear on earth.

Age of Kali—*See*: Kali-yuga

Ajñānīs—persons in ignorance.

Ārati—a ceremony for worshiping the Deity of the Lord with offerings of food, lamps, fans, flowers, and incense.

Ārya Samāj—a recent sect whose teachings are based exclusively on the four *Vedas*, rejecting all other Vedic scriptures.

Avatāra—an appearance of the Supreme Lord within this material world.

B

Bābāji—a renounced devotee who practices chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in solitude.

Bābū—a respectable gentleman.

Baladeva—the first expansion of Lord Kṛṣṇa, appearing as His elder brother.

Bastī—a slum.

Bhagavad-gītā—“Song of God”; the essential summary of spiritual knowledge spoken to Arjuna by the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Bhāgavata-dharma—the science of devotional service to the Supreme Lord (Bhagavān).

Bhāgavatam—*See*: *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*

Bhāgavata-prasādam—*See*: *Prasādam*

Bhajana-kuṭīr—a small hut in which a renounced devotee lives and practices his worship of the Lord.

Bhajanas—worship of God by the chanting of His holy names.

Bhakti—devotion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Bhakti-yoga—devotional service as the means of linking up with the Supreme.

Bhubaneswar—a city sacred to Lord Śiva, near Jagannātha Purī.

Brahmacārī—a celibate monk; the first of the four *āśramas*, or spiritual orders of life.

Brahman—the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Spirit; especially the impersonal aspect of the Absolute.

Brāhmaṇa—an intelligent man who understands the spiritual purpose of life and can instruct others; the first Vedic social order, or *varṇa*.

Brahmin—*See: Brāhmaṇa*

Braja Mandal—the sacred district that includes Vṛndāvana.

C

Cādar—a blanket or cloth used to cover the upper part of the body.

Caitanya-bhāgavata—the authorized account of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu's early life, written by Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta—the standard biography of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, written by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja.

Caitanya-līlā—the pastimes of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu—the *avatāra* of Lord Kṛṣṇa in this age whose mission is to teach love of God through the chanting of His holy names.

Capātis—whole wheat flat breads.

Caste Gosvāmīs—those who presume the status of *gosvāmī* by birthright.

Chaitanya-bhagavata—*See: Caitanya-bhāgavata*

Chaitanya Mahāprabhu—*See: Caitanya Mahāprabhu*

Chāy—tea.

D

Dacca—the present capital of Bangladesh, formerly part of Bengal.

Daṇḍavats—prostrate obeisances.

Darśana—audience with a revered personality or a Deity.

Devanāgarī—the sacred script with which Sanskrit (as well as Hindi) is written.

Dhāma—an eternal abode of the Supreme Lord.

Dharma—eternal occupational duty; religious principles.

Dharmaśālā—an inexpensive residence set up especially for pilgrims.

Dhoti—the standard Indian men's garment, a simple piece of cloth wrapped around the lower body.

Dikṣā—formal initiation into devotional life.

Dvārakā—the capital city of Lord Kṛṣṇa in His later pastimes as a great prince.

G

Gaṇeśa—the son of Lord Śiva who is worshiped to remove material impediments.

Gañjā—marijuana.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava—a follower of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Viṣṇu) in the line of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Gaurakīśora dāsa Bābājī—the initiating spiritual master of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

Geetopanishad—*See: Bhagavad-gītā*

Ghāṭas—bathing places on a holy river.

Ghee—clarified butter used as oil in cooking.

Gītā—*See: Bhagavad-gītā*

Godbrother—a fellow disciple of the same spiritual master.

Gokula—the village in which Lord Kṛṣṇa spent part of His early childhood.

Goloka Vṛndāvana—the topmost planet in the spiritual sky; residence of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Gopīs—the cowherd girls of Vṛndāvana, who are the most advanced and intimate devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Gosvāmī—one who has mastered his senses. *See also: Six Gosvāmīs*

Govardhana—the sacred hill in the region of Vṛndāvana lifted by Lord Kṛṣṇa as a child.

Govinda—the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, proprietor of the senses of all living beings.

Gr̥hastha—one who is practicing spiritual life while living with wife and children; the second *āśrama*, or spiritual order.

Gujarati—inhabitants of Gujarat, presently the westernmost province of India.

Gurv-aṣṭakam—the standard prayer to the Vaiṣṇava spiritual master, written by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura.

H

Hari-bhakti-vilāsa—the Vaiṣṇava guide, written by Sanātana Gosvāmī.
Haribol—“Chant the names of Lord Hari!”

Haridāsa Ṭhākura—the great devotee of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu who, although born a Muhammadan, was designated *ācārya* of the holy name.

Hari-kathā—*See: Kṛṣṇa-kathā*

Hari-kīrtana—glorification of Lord Hari (Kṛṣṇa) by chanting His names.

Hari-nāma—the holy name of the Supreme Lord.

I

Indraprastha—the ancient capital of the Pāṇḍavas, presently Old Delhi.

J

Jagannātha—“Lord of the universe”; a special Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa, originating in Orissa on the east coast of India at Puri.

Janmāṣṭamī—the birthday of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Japa—measured chanting of the Lord’s holy names.

Jāti-gosāi—*See: Caste Gosvāmīs*

Jaya Rādhe—“Glories to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī!”

Jiva—the individual spirit soul, in contrast to the Supreme Soul, God.

K

Kali-yuga—the present age of confusion and quarrel, which began five thousand years ago.

Karṇsa—the demoniac king who made great efforts to kill young Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Kañṭhi-mālā—sacred beads worn around the neck of a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Karatālas—sacred hand-cymbals.

Karma—fruitive action, for which there is always a reaction, good or bad.

Kasbā—the Muhammadan section of a village.

Keśī—a démon who took the form of a horse and was killed by Lord Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana.

Keśi-ghāṭa—the sacred bathing place commemorating the killing of Keśi.

Khādī—homespun cotton.

Kīrtana—glorification of God, especially by the chanting of His holy names.

Kṛṣṇa—the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Kṛṣṇa-bhakti—*See: Bhakti*

Kṛṣṇa-kathā—discussion of topics about the Supreme Lord.

Kṛṣṇa-līlā—the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa-nāma—the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Kumbha-melā—a sacred fair held once every twelve years at Prayāga.

Kurtā—an Indian men's shirt.

Kuśa grass—special grass used for making sanctified sitting mats.

L

Lakṣmī—the goddess of fortune and eternal consort of the Supreme Lord, Viṣṇu.

Leela—*See: Līlā*

Līlā—pastimes of the Supreme Lord.

Loṭā—a waterpot.

M

Mādhavendra Purī—the grand-spiritual-master of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Madhva—the fifth *ācārya* in the Vaiṣṇava disciplic succession, who taught the philosophy of pure dualism.

Madhva-Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava—*See: Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava*

Māgha-melā—a minor version of Kumbha-melā, held every year.

Mahābhārata—the great epic of ancient India that tells the story of the conflict between the Pāṇḍavas and Kurus and that includes the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Mandira—a temple of the Supreme Lord.

Maṅgala-ārati—the first worship ceremony of the day, observed before sunrise.

Mantra—a sound vibration that liberates the mind.

Maṭha—monastery.

Mathurā—the city where Lord Kṛṣṇa took birth, eight miles from Vṛndāvana.

Māyā—the illusory energy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Māyāpur—the holy birthplace of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, in Bengal.

Māyā-saṁsāra—See: *Saṁsāra*

Māyāvāda—the impersonal philosophy of Śāṅkarācārya and his followers.

Māyāvādī—a follower of Māyāvāda philosophy.

Mlecchas—meat-eaters.

Mound—an Indian weight approximately equal to six pounds.

Mṛdaṅga—a sacred drum, made of clay, used in *kīrtana*.

Mūrti—a cast or sculpted Deity form.

N

Naimiṣāranya—the holy forest, located at the exact center of the universe, where the assembly of sages headed by Śaunaka heard *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from Sūta Gosvāmī.

Nāma—name.

Nārada—the sage amongst the demigods, who is the son of Lord Brahmā and the spiritual master of Vyāsadeva.

Navadvīpa—See: *Māyāpur*

P

Pāṇḍavas—the five brothers—Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva—who were opposed by Duryodhana in the Kurukṣetra war.

Paṇḍita—a scholar.

Paramahansa—a swanlike, self-realized personality.

Paramparā—the authorized line of disciplic succession.

Prabhu—master.

Prabhupāda—“the spiritual master at whose feet all others take shelter.”

Prasādam—food spiritualized by first being offered to the Supreme Lord for His enjoyment.

Pūjā—worship according to authorized ceremony.

Pūjārī—priest.

Purāṇas—historical Vedic literatures.

Purī—the abode of Lord Jagannātha, in Orissa (on the east coast of India).

Puris—puffy wheat breads fried in ghee.

R

Rādhā-Dāmodara—Jīva Gosvāmī's worshipable Deities, still present in Vṛndāvana.

Rādhā-kuṇḍa—"Rādhā's pond," the most holy place for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, located in the region of Vṛndāvana.

Rādhā-Mādhava—Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Rādhā(rāṇī)—the eternal consort of Lord Kṛṣṇa and manifestation of His internal pleasure potency.

Rāma(candra)—the incarnation of the Supreme Lord as the ideal king.

Rāmāyaṇa—the epic history of Lord Rāmacandra written by the sage Vālmiki.

Rasaleela—*See: Rāsa-līlā*

Rāsa-līlā—Kṛṣṇa's pastime of dancing with the *gopīs*.

Ratha-yātrā—the annual cart festival of Lord Jagannātha.

Rudra—Lord Śiva.

Rūpa Gosvāmī—*See: Six Gosvāmīs*

S

Sabji—vegetables.

Sādhu—a saintly person.

Śālagrāma—a special Deity of the Supreme Lord in the form of a round stone.

Samādhi—yogic trance.

Sampradāya—*See: Paramparā*

Samsāra—the cycle of repeated birth and death.

Sanātana-dharma—the eternal religion, to render service to the Supreme Lord.

Sanātana Gosvāmī—*See: Six Gosvāmīs*

Sandhyā-ārati—the evening worship ceremony.

Śaṅkīrtana—congregational chanting of the holy names of the Lord, the recommended process of *yoga* for this age.

Sannyāsa—the renounced order of life; the fourth *āśrama*, or spiritual order, of Vedic society.

Sannyāsa-daṇḍa—the sacred staff carried by a person in the renounced order of life.

Sannyāsa-guru—the spiritual master who initiates a devotee into the renounced order of life.

Sannyāsi—one in the *sannyāsa* order.

Sārī—the standard woman's garment in Indian society.

Śāstra—scripture.

Śāstrī—an authority on Vedic scriptures.

Ṣaṭ-sandarbha—an authoritative, topically arranged commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* by Jīva Gosvāmī.

Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu—a Deity form of Lord Viṣṇu lying on the many-headed serpent Ananta Śeṣa.

Śikhā—the tuft of hair remaining on the back of the shaven head of a Vaiṣṇava.

Six Gosvāmīs—Rūpa, Sanātana, Raghunātha dāsa, Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, and Jīva Gosvāmī; the followers of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu who established devotional service as a scientific process for God realization in the modern age.

Smārta—a ritualistic follower of the *Vedas*.

Śrāddha—the Vedic sacrifice performed for departed parents to ensure their good fortune in the next life.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—the voluminous scripture composed by Śrīla Vyāsadeva to describe and explain Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

Subhadra—the younger sister of Lord Kṛṣṇa and personification of His spiritual potency.

Śūdra—a laborer; the fourth *varṇa*, or social order, which is compared to the legs of society.

Suvarṇa-vaṇik—a gold merchant.

Swami—See: *Gosvāmī*

Syāma-kunḍa—"Lord Kṛṣṇa's pond," a very sacred place next to Rādhā-kunḍa.

T

Ṭāṅgā—a horse-drawn cart.

Tiffin—a stacked set of metal food containers.

- Tilaka**—sacred clay marking the body of a devotee as a temple of God.
Tridaṇḍi-sannyāsa—the renounced order of life as practiced by Vaiṣṇavas, contrasted to the *ekadaṇḍa-sannyāsa* of the impersonalists.
Tulasī—the plant most sacred to Lord Viṣṇu.
Tulasī-mālā—chanting beads made of sacred *tulasī* wood.

V

- Vaikunṭha**—“place of no anxiety”; the spiritual sky, the eternal abode of Lord Viṣṇu.
Vaiṣṇavas—devotees of Viṣṇu (or Kṛṣṇa).
Vānaprastha—retirement from active family life, wherein one makes pilgrimage to holy places, prior to *sannyāsa*.
Vedāṅgas—supplements to the original *Vedas*.
Vedānta-sūtra—the summary of all Vedic conclusions, written in short aphorisms by Vyāsadeva.
Vedas—the four original texts first spoken by the Lord Himself and their supplements, compiled by Śrīla Vyāsadeva.
Vedic—based on the *Vedas*.
Vishnu—*See*: Viṣṇu
Viṣṇu—the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, appearing in His majestic four-armed form.
Viśvarūpa—the older brother of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
Vṛndāvana—the personal abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the inhabitants of which are all His intimate servants.
Vṛndāvana-candra—the “moon of Vṛndāvana,” Lord Kṛṣṇa.
Vyāsadeva—the great sage who compiled all the Vedic literatures at the beginning of this age, five thousand years ago.
Vyāsa-pūjā—the observance of the appearance day of one’s spiritual master, who is worshiped as the representative of Vyāsadeva.
Vyāsāsana—the honored seat of the spiritual master.

Y

- Yadu**—the ancient king in whose family Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared.
Yoga—any of various spiritual disciplines meant for purification and ultimate realization of one’s position as servant of God.
Yogī—a *yoga* practitioner.



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The Author

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami was born on December 6, 1939, in New York City. He attended public schools and received a B.A. from Brooklyn College in 1961. Then followed two years as a journalist in the U.S. Navy and three years as a social worker in New York City.


In July 1966, he met His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, and he became his initiated disciple in September of that year. Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami began contributing articles to *Back to Godhead*, the magazine of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, and later became its editor in chief. In August 1967 he went to Boston to establish the first ISKCON center there. Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami was one of the original members selected by Śrīla Prabhupāda to form the Governing Body Commission of ISKCON in 1970. He remained as president of Boston ISKCON until 1971, when he moved to Dallas and became headmaster of Gurukula, the first ISKCON school for children.

In May 1972, on the appearance day of Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva, he was awarded the *sannyāsa* (renounced) order by His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda and began traveling across the United States, lecturing in colleges and universities. In January 1974 he was called by Śrīla Prabhupāda to become his personal secretary and to travel with him through India and Europe. In 1976 he published *Readings in Vedic Literature*, a concise account of the Vedic tradition. The volume is now being studied at various American universities. In 1977 Śrīla Prabhupāda ordered him to accept the duties of initiating *guru*, along with ten other senior disciples. He is presently working on a long-term literary project, preparing further volumes of the biography of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.









political activism for a life of spiritual activism—a life which blossoms years later when, renouncing family and business, he takes up the life of a *sādhū*, a renounced holy man. From that point on, he fully focuses his attention upon the mission entrusted to him by Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī: the respiritualization of human society.

For the multivolume *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, the author's research team has traveled throughout the world to gather thousands of hours of recorded interviews with hundreds of people who knew Śrīla Prabhupāda; diaries and memoirs from his students; and more than seven thousand letters written by Śrīla Prabhupāda himself. This massive quantity of firsthand source material is gradually being distilled into a rich composite view of Śrīla Prabhupāda, a picture at once devotional and objective, of one of the most remarkable lives of our time.

About the Author

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami was among the first young Americans to assist Śrīla Prabhupāda in his mission in the West. For many years he was an intimate disciple of and personal secretary to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami is also the author of *Readings in Vedic Literature: The Tradition Speaks for Itself*; *A Handbook for Krishna Consciousness*; and *He Lives Forever: On Separation from Śrīla Prabhupāda*.

"This life of Śrīla Prabhupāda is pointed proof that one can be a transmitter of truth and still be a vital and singular person. . . . At what almost anyone would consider a very advanced age, when most people would be resting on their laurels, he harkened to the mandate of his own spiritual teacher and set out on a difficult and demanding voyage to

America. Śrīla Prabhupāda is one in a thousand, maybe one in a million."

Harvey Cox,
Professor of Divinity
Harvard University.
Author of The Secular City,
Turning East, and others.

"His Divine Grace A.C.
Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
is doing valuable work, and his
books are significant
contributions to the salvation
of mankind."

Sri Bal Bahadur Shastri
Former Prime Minister of India
(1964-66)

